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THE

INDIAN ALPS

THE INDIAN ALPS AND HOW WE CROSSED THEM

BEING A NARRATIVE OF

TWO YEARS' SOJOURN IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYA AND TWO MONTHS' TOUR INTO THE INTERIOR

BY

A LADY PIONEER

ILLUSTRATED BY HERSELF

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TO

MY MOTHER

These Pages

THE SUBSTANCE OF LETTERS SENT HOME TO HER DURING ALMOST

THE ONLY TIME WE WERE EVER SEPARATED

Are affectionately Inscribed

PREFACE.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES were written principally in India, and sent home at short intervals for the exclusive perusal of a family circle. They make no pretension to a scientific character, the little band of travellers who ventured with me into the interior of the Eastern Himalaya having done so, not for the purpose of scientific research, but simply to explore an almost unknown country, and to enjoy the incidents of travel. Neither do they pretend to give any adequate conception of the magnificence of the scenery of that vast mountain region, for in truth its beauty and grandeur are alike beyond all power of description.

For the defects of this volume I may perhaps be

allowed to plead the difficulties of a task which can never be more than imperfectly achieved; while, in asking an indulgent judgment of the drawings from which the chromolithographs and woodcuts have been executed, I may mention that they were painted, in almost every instance, with frozen fingers, the smaller sketches being often scratched hastily on letter paper, as I sat sometimes on a portmanteau and sometimes on a tent-peg. In laying them before the public I have yielded to the earnest solicitation of my friends. If the perusal of these pages should prove a source of gratification to others, who, by following on paper my footsteps over untrodden paths, may be able in ever so faint a degree to realise something of the glory and sublimity of that highly favoured land, I shall not regret that I overcame the diffidence I felt in giving publication to the book.

In indicating our route into the 'interior' by a red line on the map, I have given the general bearings only of our journey. Had we taken 'observations' at the end of each day's march, our route would have presented a zig-zag appearance, as the configuration of the mountains we had to cross sometimes obliged us to

travel in a north-westerly and sometimes in a north-easterly direction. As no such 'observations' were taken, I have indicated the route in the simplest manner possible—viz. by a comparatively straight line. In computing the distance of our tour by the scale on the map, I may also mention that the elevations and depressions necessarily incident to mountain-travelling should be taken into consideration, none of which could be indicated on the flat surface of a map.

CLEVEDON: *December* 16, 1875.

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Page 91, headline, for *THE BHOOTIA BUSH* read *THE BHOOTIA BUSTI*

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THE INDIAN ALPS

AND

HOW WE CROSSED THEM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

There is a spot of earth, supremely blest,
A dearer sweeter spot than all the rest.—MONTGOMERY.

O SCARLET poppies in the rich ripe corn! O sunny uplands striped with golden sheaves! O darkling heather on the distant hills, stretching away, away to the far-off sea, where little boats with white sails, vague and indistinct in the misty horizon, lie floating dreamily!

How exquisitely the soft neutral grey of the sea contrasts with that bit of bright sandy beach, and the crimson clover with the canary colour of the sunlit meadows! One's sense of harmony is never ruffled or disturbed by the colours on earth's broad palette. The sky, flecked with fleecy clouds, is soft and blue.

Lights and shadows, ever shifting, play athwart the quivering fern-brake, just showing the first warm tinge of autumnal splendour. All nature inanimate is immersed in the semi-slumber of noontide Now and then a buttercup nods its head as though it were napping, and on a harebell stalk a butterfly poises itself, with a gentle see-saw motion, as if rocking itself to sleep. Nothing seems really awake but the bees, still buzzing about the wild flowers; but even they are gathering no honey, as far as I can see, and are only pretending to be busy. The very rooks have ceased to whirl round those old elms yonder, and, congregated on the church tower, which seems to keep guard over the quiet dead in the churchyard beneath, are far too drowsy to enter into animated conversation. Occasionally an argumentative bird sustains a prolonged caw, but finding no one in the humour to contradict him, he soon subsides into the general stillness.

But see! the upland there to westward, bathed in a flood of ambient light an instant ago, is immersed in sombre shade, as a cloud floats lazily between it and the sun; and, hidden before, now bursts into view, as if by magic, a thatched cottage, the one salient point of the whole landscape. Within the doorway the movements of the cotter's wife may be seen, at some occupation, and a little picture of rural contentment and quietude has been created in a moment. She comes out, and a charming woman she proves to be—charming, that is to say, in an

artistic sense—something orange about her neck, and wearing a madder-coloured gown, whilst a small red-and-white child toddles after her. She has evidently come out to feed the pigs, by the clamour they make at her approach, and there is no need to ask the hour, or note that the sun is at its meridian; for, entering by the wicket, comes the goodman home for his mid-day meal, and from the steeple, surmounted by its weathercock, which gently swings from side to side, the clock strikes twelve, its cracked bell the one bit of discord the ear needed to make the harmony complete.

Why at this instant does the bright blue ribbon round the neck of my little Skye terrier sitting beside me look out of 'keeping'? Why does his sharp civilised yap-yap grate on my ear, as he gazes beseechingly in my face for a token of permission to be off to worry the pigs? Why would a female rustic in ragged attire, sitting on a sunny bank, be more in harmony with nature than one wearing the 'last sweet thing' in hats, its feather just at the particular pose of the year eighteen hundred and seventy—no matter what? Is there no affinity between Mother Nature and the wearers of purple and fine linen? Must we be sons and daughters of the soil to render us one kin? There is poetry in that ragged time-worn thatch, with its tufts of weed and moss growing out of every available cranny; there is poetry in the cotter's wife and her little red-and-white child; there is poetry even in those squeaking and

excited pigs, quarrelling greedily over their 'wash.' Then why not in me and my Skye? In what consists the picturesque?

Such questions as these I used to ask in the golden days of childhood, and on one occasion received a severe snubbing from my governess, who, shaking her head ominously, predicted I should grow up to be a visionary creature not fit for this world, bidding me the rather be practical and get on with my geography. For in those days of my non-age nature was ever a delight to me, and I could draw a landscape pretty accurately, the trees it may be too much like Dutch toys, and the perspective somewhat startling; for has not one of those brilliant productions been preserved by loving hands through all the vicissitude of the chequered past, wherein I am represented in conventional pinafore standing at a window listening to the warbling of a sentimental bull-finch as big as myself? But the 'three r's' were an abomination unto me, and geography the very bane of my existence. How little I thought then—ah me! how little any of us think in that Paradise of childhood, when our future lives are to be 'so happy,' where the paths are to be hedged with thornless roses and the flowers to be all 'everlastings,' none to be gathered by the reaper Death—how little I thought, I repeat, in those days whilst she endeavoured to impress upon my unlistening ear the position of the Himalayan mountains, that in after years I should climb their heights and be

able, as now, to recall to mind visions of fairer scenes and fairer skies than even that on which my eye is resting, and behold such grand things in God's beauteous earth, of which man in his philosophy never dreamt.

But are there scenes more fair than those in our own dear land? Well, perhaps not fairer, for nature is sweet in her homely English garb. I love these scented meadows in the glorious summer time; I love these rounded hills and sloping pasture-lands, telling of centuries of peace and plenty; but there are scenes which to look upon make man humbler, and, I think, the better; and even as I sit here quietly drinking in all this placid, tranquil beauty, I am seized with a spirit of unrest, and long to be far away and once more in their midst. Would you see Nature in all her savage grandeur? Then follow me to her wildest solitudes—the home of the yâk, and the wild deer, the land of the citron, and the orange, the arctic lichen, and the pine—where, in deep Alpine valley, rivers cradled in gigantic precipices, and fed by icy peaks, either thunder over tempest-shattered rock, or sleep to the music of their own lullaby—even to the far East, amongst the Indian Alps.

Kennst Du das Land wo die Citronen blühn,
Im dunkeln Laub die gold Orangen glühn,
Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
Die Myrte still, und hoch der Lorbeer steht,
Kennst Du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin!
Mocht ich mit Dir, O mein Geliebter, ziehn.

GOETHE.

It has been said that nothing can be more grand and majestic than the Alps of Switzerland, and that size is a phantom of the brain, an optical illusion, grandeur consisting rather in form than size. As a rule it may be so; but they are 'minute philosophers' who sometimes argue thus. Not that I would disparage the Swiss Alps, which were my first loves, and which, it must be acknowleged, do possess more of *picturesque* beauty than the greater, vaster mountains of the East; but the stupendous Himalaya—in their great loneliness and vast magnificence, impossible alike to pen and pencil adequately to pourtray, their height, and depth, and length, and breadth of snow appealing to the emotions—impress one as nothing else can, and seem to expand one's very soul.

We were sitting at dinner one evening beneath a punkah in one of the cities of the plains of India, feeling languid and flabby and miserable, the thermometer standing at anything you like to mention, when the 'khansamah' (butler) presented F—— with a letter, the envelope of which bore the words, 'On Her Majesty's Service;' and on opening it he found himself under orders for two years' service at Darjeeling, one of the lovely settlements in the Himalaya, the 'Abode of Snow'—*Him*, in Sanscrit, signifying 'Snow,' and *alaya* 'Abode'—the *Imaus* of the ancients.

Were the 'Powers that be' ever so transcendently gracious? Imagine, if you can, what such an announce-

ment conveyed to our minds. Emancipation from the depleting influences of heat almost unbearable, for the bracing and life-giving breezes which blow over regions of eternal ice and snow.

But even in these days it is wonderful to what an extent ignorance prevails about the more unfrequented parts of India; for it is not generally known, except as a mere abstract truth, that in this vast continent—associated as it is in the purely English mind with scorching heat and arid plains, stretching from horizon to horizon, relieved by naught save belts of palm-girt jungle, the habitat of the elephant, the tiger, and the deadly snake—every variety of climate may be found, from the sultry heat and miasma of the tropical valley, to the temperature of the Poles.

Is not India, indeed, almost exclusively regarded as a land of songless birds arrayed in brightest plumage; of gorgeous butterflies and 'atlas' moths; of cacao-nuts, and dates, and pines more luscious than anything of which the classic Pomona could boast?—a land also where snakes sit corkscrew-like at the foot of one's bed, and wild beasts take shelter in one's 'bungalow'; and where her Majesty's liege subjects, whose fate it is to be exiled there, are exposed to the alternate processes of roasting under a tropical sun, and melting beneath a punkah?

To the feminine mind, again, is it not a land of Cashmere shawls—'such loves'—and fans, and sandal-wood boxes, and diaphanous muslins?—presents sent

over at too infrequent intervals from uncles and cousins, about whom, vegetating in that far-off land, there is always a halo of pleasant mystery, and arriving, redolent of 'cuscus' and spicy odours and a whole bouquet of Indian fragrance, which wafts one away in spirit across the desert and the sunlit ocean to that wonderland in an instant.

A region there is, however, of countless bright oases in these vast plains, where the cuckoo's plaintive note recalls sweet memories of our island home, and mingles with the soft melody of other birds; where the stately oak — monarch of our English woods — spreading its branches, blends them with those of the chestnut, the walnut, and the birch; where in mossy slopes the 'nodding violet blows,' and wild strawberries deck the green bank's side, like rubies set in emerald. I allude of course to the noble snow-capped Himalaya, the loftiest mountains in the world, with whose *existence* everyone is acquainted, but about which brains even saturated with geographical knowledge are yet as ignorant, so far as their topographical aspect and wondrous hidden beauty are concerned, as they are about the mountains in the moon.

Along this chain, at elevations where the temperature is similar to that of England, numerous sanataria lie nestling, enfolded in their mighty undulations, and dwarfed by the vastness of the surrounding peaks into little toy-like settlements. These are convalescent

depôts for our British soldiers, and refuges for Indian society generally; for all who are able migrate from the plains to these cool regions during the fierce heat of summer, to reinvigorate themselves in the delicious climate.

The most beautiful of all these sanataria, as far as scenery is concerned, though by no means the largest, is Darjeeling, or the 'Holy Spot'—the Sceptre of the Priesthood—as its name signifies in the Thibetan language; and to this fair Eden—oh, joy!—we are to proceed without delay.

CHAPTER II.

AWAY TO THE HIGHLANDS!

AND so it came to pass one stifling evening, the sun setting a disc of fire, that two figures might be seen, not descending a hill on 'white palfries,' but stepping into a prosaic 'dinghy,' to be ferried across the Hooghly, a branch of the Ganges—a muddy river truly, but all a-glow now with the sun's crimson dye, which has kindled the dome of Government House and the many cupolas and spires of the fair City of Palaces almost into a blaze.

Away down the river noble ships ride at anchor, waiting for the morrow's tide to bear them over its treacherous and ever-shifting sandbanks to the distant sea. Looking towards the city, forests of stately masts from every port under heaven tower skywards, and along the Strand a dense throng of carriages may be seen moving slowly, as the denizens of the proud metropolis, released from their closed houses—from which every particle of the outer atmosphere has been excluded throughout the livelong day—take their '*hawā*

khanā,' which, literally translated, means 'eat the air.' From the beautiful 'Eden Gardens' the sound of the band, borne on the sultry breeze, comes wafted towards us; while at the many 'ghauts' numerous figures are seen standing on the steps or in the sacred waters, salaaming to the Day-god as he sinks to rest. Bathing is a religious ceremony with these children of the East—a process said to wash away sin; but, as a rule, they economise time by cleansing their linen and their consciences together, and may generally be seen alternately salaaming and scrubbing away at their 'chuddahs' as they stand waist-deep in the mystic flood.

Noisily settling themselves to roost in the tall pepūl trees that fringe its margin, are enormous bald-headed adjutants; whilst others still linger about the steps, balancing themselves on one leg, their long pouches dangling in the air, as they gravely watch the proceedings of the bathers. Loathsome vultures flutter uneasily 'neath the palm fronds, uttering every now and then a shrill moan, as though possessed with the unquiet spirit of the Hindoo which but a day or two ago tenanted the body they have just left, stranded somewhere down the river's banks. From the jungle a mile or two away comes the wild jackal's cry, answered by another herd more distant still, as they call each other to some unholy feast. The Mahomedans bury their dead, but there was a time, not so long ago either, when the bodies of the 'mild Hindoo,' except those of high caste, were

invariably thrown into the river; but cremation of some sort is now, I believe, the custom amongst Hindoos, if not actually enforced by law, although frequent evasions of it still exist.

In the days I speak of, the statement that the living were left on the banks to die or be washed away by the tide was no Eastern fable, for I have myself often seen the sick carried along on 'charpoys' (bedsteads) in the direction of the sacred river, moving as they went.

But let us quit such painful scenes. Already merrily gleam the thousand lamps which surround the white palaces of the King of Oude's zananas, like a necklace of diamonds, casting their reflection in the water. In little inlets—arms of the river—all amongst the dark trees, fires are burning, indicating the existence of boats moored there, in which swarthy boatmen are cooking their evening meal. Here and there a tiny light may be seen floating down the river; and you may be sure, though you cannot see them in the gathering darkness, that rustic houris—whose beehive dwellings are hidden in the thick jungle—are standing or kneeling on the slimy brink, watching with eager prayerful eyes the fortunes of the little bark; for these superstitious people seek therefrom the foreknowledge of events. If it float on out of sight still burning, well is it for the object of their wishes; but should it go out—by no means unfrequently the case—the contrary is augured. These lights, floating star-like on the dark waters, and seen from the suburban

bridges at all hours of the night, are to my mind the one poetical feature of this eastern city.

Ferried across to the measure of our boatmen's 'barcarolle,' we reach the opposite shore just as the steam-ferry draws up to the pier; and there is no time to lose, for the express is waiting its arrival.

'Can't get in there, sir; that is reserved accommodation for ladies,' shouts the station-master from the other end of the platform, on F——'s following me into the luxurious first-class carriage, fitted with berths for night travelling. As there happens to be no other lady passenger, however, he is permitted to remain; and to prevent molestation at either of the subsequent stations, he at once lies down, and covering himself with shawls and other articles of feminine attire, hopes thus to elude detection.

Leaving all signs of the great metropolis behind, we are soon whirling through rural Bengal: and what a deadly looking swamp it is! Through rice fields, stretching away into the distant horizon; by morass, and fen, and sedgy pool, till the whole country seems under water; by clumps of waving palm trees, standing out black against the afterglow like funereal plumes; till evening at length gives place to night, and all colour fades save in the West, where a narrow blood-red streak, like the reflection from a hundred monster furnaces, still lingers in the heavens, and we reach Serampore.

The official looks in, apparently regarding the lanky figure opposite me with some suspicion. He is no doubt

up to these little subterfuges, but he passes by notwithstanding; and I have just made up my mind that we are to be left undisturbed, when he returns, and this time stands upon the step and looks in.

'Is that a lady opposite you?' he enquires.

'A lady? Well, no; not exactly! The fact is, it is my husband,' I am obliged to confess at last, as F——, moving slightly, lets the shawl slip with which I had endeavoured to conceal him, thereby betraying an unmistakably masculine boot.

'Then you must come out of this carriage, sir.'

'I can't,' replies F——, with some degree of truth; 'my wife's an invalid, and I cannot leave her.'

'Can't help that, sir,' rejoins the uncompromising station-master. 'There's a carriage here, where you can both travel together' (holding the door of one of the general first-class carriages open).

At this juncture, having heard the altercation, the guard appeared, and, master of the situation, addressing F—— with a significant look, said: 'Come into this carriage, sir;' and aside, 'I'll make it all right at the next station.'

Upon which F—— retired for the present, soon to return in triumph for the remainder of the night, when he subsided into sound sleep till peep of day, by which time we reached Sahibgunge, and our railway journey was completed.

Here we were told by an oleaginous native func-

tionary, who gave us the information as though it were a matter of no consequence whatever—which nothing ever seems to be to these phlegmatic people—that all our baggage had been left behind, adding that a luggage train left an hour or two after the express, by which he thought it *likely* they might forward it, in which case we should get it in the course of the day. At this announcement F—— growled out something that I did not catch; perhaps it was a benediction, perhaps it was not. At any rate, it was already too hot to think of getting into a passion; for, early as it was, the sun had sent upwards his avant-guard of crimson cloud, bearing, as on ensign armorial, all the blazonry of his pomp and splendour, and a curtain, like cloth of gold, suddenly spread itself over the Eastern sky, as it does only in these latitudes.

Now this non-arrival of our effects would have obliged us to stay at Sahibgunge all the next day—one of the most execrable places in the Mofussil of India—had we not brought a trustworthy servant with us, the steamer by which we were to cross to Caragola leaving hours before the baggage-train would be due. But we are able to depart, fortunately, committing our belongings to his charge, and leaving him to wait their arrival, and follow with them the next day.

The sacred river from this point looks like a broad lake, with low sand-banks here and there, like little flat islands, just peeping above the water. . Reaching the

steamer, we find that, being the only passengers, we are to have it all to ourselves; and at ten o'clock, casting off her moorings, we are afloat for the first time upon the sacred Ganges.

Sitting under the awning we watch the various boats float by: some like immense hay-stacks rowed

by twenty men; others with clumsy square sails, and thatched huts on their decks, containing merchandise from Nepaul; whilst light little dinghies, with sails set to the wind, bob up and down as they get into the swell of the steamer, and seem to be curtseying to us as they pass.

Then leaning over the steamer's side, in fancy I travel onwards far far away along the course of this

mighty stream, even to its birthplace in eternal snow, whence, issuing beneath a low arch among the glaciers, it is first seen trickling over its narrow bed, worn deep in solid granite, at so great an elevation that the more ignorant of its worshippers believe it descends from paradise itself. Amongst a people of so lively an imagination and extravagant sentiment, endowing as they do so many things inanimate with form and life, it is no wonder that they should have idealised that which brings with it, as from the very heavens, not only fertilisation to these parching plains, but so many other blessings. Accordingly there is a whole world of fables believed in by Hindoos concerning this holiest of rivers, with which the most ancient of all classic lore is connected, and they worship it under the imagery of a goddess whom they call Gunga, the daughter of Himavat; the sublime and lofty solitudes of the Himalaya, like Mount Olympus to the Greeks, being the very home and centre of their mythology. The Hindoos were in a high state of civilisation when Europe was still lying in deepest slumber; for it must be remembered that Hindustan was the cradle of the arts and sciences, and these people—'Niggers,' as I have often heard them contemptuously called—were in possession of both, when even the Greeks lay in obscurity, and the Britons, too oft their despisers, were—humiliating thought—barbarians!

When the sun gets vertical, the captain kindly places

his cabin at my disposal—the only one in the steamer—where, weary of my night's travelling, I remain till it begins to set behind the crimson horizon. And what a sunset! turning the fleet of little boats moored along its banks—for we are gradually nearing Caragola—into jewelled caskets. Far out in the stream a boat is cross-

ing the sunlight, looking black and weird, with a man sitting at its prow, who, for aught that he looked like, might have been Charon himself, ferrying the spirits of the departed over Styx.

Dinner is provided on board, after which we again go on deck, and see the moon rise, a full round orb, bridging the river by a band of tremulous silver light. Southwards the bold outline of the Rajmahals is seen,

quite respectable hills, which by courtesy one might almost call mountains, after living long in the plains. They cast a reflection deep and sombre on the broad expanse of water, in the shadow of which a ship is anchored — a mere toy it looks from this distance, its solitary light burning pale and cold. A flight of wild ducks skims past us, and over the still waters comes softly a boatman's song, 'La—illa—illa—la,' rising and falling in musical but pathetic cadence.

CHAPTER III.

'THE GOVERNMENT BULLOCK TRAIN.'

And now, how can I describe the old-world style of locomotion, still existing in the nineteenth century, on the 'Grand Trunk Road' in this magnificent Dependency, 'the brightest jewel,' &c. &c., for we have reached a shore where the shriek of the locomotive is never heard.

Having left the steamer on our arrival at Caragola, and crawling up the steep incline knee-deep in sand, we find a 'hackery' awaiting us, covered by a rough tilt—a sort of gipsy arrangement—to which are yoked two small bullocks; the whole thing of a kind which you feel sure must have been in use in the time of the Pharaohs, the wheels of almost solid wood rolling round with a reluctance and squeak that is positively maddening. This goes, laughable as it may seem, by the dignified and euphonious appellation of the 'Government Bullock Train.'

All is ready for departure, for they had seen the steamer, a little black speck in the horizon, two hours ago. We mount our chariot therefore and start at the magnificent pace of a mile and a half an hour. The rules are, I believe, that they shall not be required to go faster

than *three miles* an hour; but as they never by any chance arrive at this alarming speed, the prohibition is scarcely necessary.

A lantern suspended from the tilt sways to and fro, the tassel of F——'s smoking-cap, doing likewise, keeps time with it; the body of the driver, sitting astride the pole to which the bullocks are attached, sways backwards and forwards too, with the regularity of a piece of mechanism, as he pokes and pushes first this bullock and then that, varied only, alas! by screwing their tails round and round in his endeavours to get them on. Besides this, the goad, a short stout stick, is often called into requisition, answering the double purpose of poking and striking, the latter accomplished in successive thuds on their poor lean backs, and accompanied by an amount of jabbering persuasion inconceivable to anyone who has not travelled under the Jehuship of an Asiatic, the former making one's very heart sick, and the latter beyond everything annoying to the ear. But nothing makes the slightest impression upon them. By all these combined efforts they are simply kept in motion, and I soon grow stoical in the matter, and learn to believe that without them they would not move at all.

After a while, however, just when we are sinking into a state of somnolence, induced by the monotony of the whole performance, we hear the stick administered with more than ordinary energy, and they do make an effort for once, and succeed in getting into a trot; but it

is only to take us clean off the road and land us upside down in the 'paddy' (rice) field seven feet below.

But this does not appear to excite the smallest surprise in our Jehu, who seems to take it all as a matter of course; and after we have managed to scramble out—hardly knowing which is our head or which our heels, not hurt, but severely shaken—he gives them one deprecatory glance, and proceeds leisurely to unfasten the yoke.

The bullocks, once loose, begin quietly grazing as if nothing had happened, whilst we sit down on the bank and bear it as philosophically as we can, till our triumphal car is righted and again put in motion, when, in process of time, we reach the first 'chokee' (or stage), and have to change our noble beasts.

This is a sleepy little village, surrounded by 'paddy' fields, a light here and there glimmering feebly through the doors of the mud huts. The driver shouts, to arouse the amiable native who has to furnish us with the expected relay, 'Jaf-fa!' repeated several times, but no answer; 'Ho! Jaf-fa-a-a-a!' descending the gamut in an injured tone. At length a light is seen slowly approaching from a distant hut—they never hurry themselves, these Orientals, under the most pressing circumstances—and the bearer of it gives us the consoling information that there *is* no relay of bullocks, a 'bobbery (quarrelsome) sahib' having taken those we were to have had for his own 'dâk' about an hour ago, his beasts having broken down by the way.

At this declaration, the driver makes use of choice Hindustani expletives, and pronounces it to be a 'jhūt' (lie); but on his maintaining the assertion, what can we do but 'bless the bobbery sahib,' which I am afraid F—— does in language no less complimentary, and offer 'backsheesh' to our informant if he will only obtain other bullocks speedily elsewhere.

Stimulated by this magic word, he retires with more precipitation than is their wont, and we watch his light growing fainter and fainter as he crosses the paddy-field. No matter how bright may shine the moon, natives are never seen without carrying a lantern at night, which they say frightens away 'cobras,' a snake whose bite is death; and presently we hear his voice growing more and more distant, as he calls his kine, straying in the jungle far away; whilst we are compelled to wait two weary, dreary, miserable hours, before we can once more proceed on our way.

This, then, is the 'Government Bullock Train'—what an imposing title!—for which, together with the transit of our luggage by a similar conveyance, F——, with becoming gravity, paid 75 rupees (7*l.* 10*s.*) to the Post-office authorities a few days before starting, the name in itself being a guarantee of its respectability, suggesting to the mind of the uninitiated, if it suggested anything in particular, a train freighted with bullocks! At any rate the word *train* at once conveyed the idea of speed, and for this reason it has no doubt been ironically

given; but we hope the Indian Government will be more sedate in its nomenclature for the future, and give up jesting, which is improper and undignified in the Great.

In like fashion creeping along the road, the monotony relieved by similar incidents, the first faint streak of dawn appears, and in the cold grey half-light we overtake long lines of 'hackeries' of a more primitive kind than that even in which we are journeying, each wheel, as it revolves, producing its own particular and peculiar squeak —for they never grease them, to do so would cause the drivers to lose their caste—all looking as if they had come straight out of the land of Canaan, and were going down into Egypt to buy oil, and corn, and wine; and, following in their wake, we fancy *we* must be going down into Egypt too, with our money in our sack's mouth.

Past miles and miles of dusty pepūl trees, growing on each side of the road, the soft blue distance seen through them, bathed in silvery mist, and there is a dewy freshness in the air. Past strings of pilgrims, walking wearily along to or from some shrine, probably Parisnāth, a mountain of unusual sanctity across the Ganges, the centre of Jain worship. On, till we meet commissariat waggons, drawn by immense bullocks, beautiful creatures with large meek eyes like gazelles, soft dove-colour skins, and large humps on their backs, which, being hungry, we feel inclined to eat, there being nothing carnose half so delicious as these humps when salted. Past little villages, scarcely awake yet, and more hackeries, the poor

beasts moving their heads from side to side, as they strive to make the hard yoke easier to their necks. Ah! well, indeed, has Scripture used it as a symbol of a burden grievous to be borne.

At length a great clatter is heard in the distance, and something is seen hovering above the road, bearing down upon us like an enormous vulture, which turns out to be nothing more or less than Her Majesty's mail, sending up clouds of dust, and hiding everything but the driver and an unhappy traveller clinging on by his eyelids to the back seat.

CHAPTER IV.

WE REACH OUR FIRST STAGING BUNGALOW, AND PARTAKE OF 'SUDDEN DEATH.'

It was broad day by the time we reached Purneah, and came to anchor in the little 'bungalow' which answers to a roadside inn. We caught sight of the kitmutgar, or table attendant, some little time ago, performing his simple toilet in the verandah, as he heard the familiar squeak of our chariot wheels, and knew that some '*sahib logue*' must be approaching. We have scarcely alighted when he presents himself, and with a low salaam begs to be informed what we wish for breakfast, which is followed by the very natural question from the '*sahib logue*' of 'What can you give us?'—the rejoinder, nine times out of ten in these places, where travellers are comparatively few and far between, being, '*Moorghee grill, sahib, aur chupattee* (grilled fowl and chupattee):' the former, a dish known in India, in the language of modern ethics, as 'sudden death,' from the fact of the unfortunate little feathered biped being captured, killed, *skinned*, grilled, and on the table in the space of twenty minutes; and the latter an odious leathery, and indigestible

compound, apparently made of equal proportions of sand and flour, and eaten as a substitute for bread.

Now follows the chase for the irrepressible 'moorghee,' which is always at hand, pecking and strutting about amongst its kind in the 'compound,' or inclosure of the bungalow; sometimes making migratory raids and explorations into the hackery in search of crumbs, or any other small delicacies that may happen to be found within it, till the *bāwārchi* (cook) is seen emerging from the cookhouse across the yard, at the sight of whom, even before he is in pursuit, the whole brood are in violent commotion, their instinct—or 'hereditary experience,' handed down to them by a long line of suffering ancestors, likewise sacrificed to 'grill'—warning them what is to come. The greater number, however, manage to elude the inevitable for a while, by making their escape; but one or two of nervous temperament get too frightened to follow the rest in their flight, and, losing their heads entirely, make a dash into the bungalow itself, then under the table, and, hunted down for a few minutes longer, are usually run to earth at last beneath one's very chair. Then succeeds the poor little captive's last speech and confession, whilst the *kitmutgar* is hastily laying the cloth, and one can hear it frizzling over the fire in a twinkling. Should the traveller require a second or third course, as he generally does, moorghee cutlets or moorghee currie await him; and other victims have to be sacrificed, accompanied by the usual preliminaries.

Here, however, we find ourselves in clover, and in the lap of luxury itself, for Purneah being a station of some importance, it possesses a bazaar, and the kitmutgar informs us that, in addition to 'moorghee grill,' we can have 'mutton chop grid-iron-fry,' whatever that may be—a dish hitherto unknown to us in our experience of the deep mysteries of the Indian cuisine.

These staging bungalows usually contain four rooms, each opening pleasantly upon a verandah; the furniture, however, is of the most wretched description, consisting merely of a table, a punkah, and a few uncomfortable chairs, in which, after your long journey, you sit ill at ease, wishing you possessed the buckram vertebræ of your ancestors, whilst the matting covering the floors is too frequently in holes. Musing as you sit bolt upright, you will probably be attracted by the least possible noise, and, on looking in the direction of the sound, may see a pair of antennæ or tiny legs, with a small head peeping above the matting where it skirts the walls. It may be that of a centipede or little black scorpion, or, if the time be evening, a fleshy-brown cockroach. They are as a rule, however, very clean, being under the superintendence of the Public Works Department—not the cockroaches, but the bungalows—and are unquestionably a great convenience to travellers up the country.

Weary of our long night in the 'Government Bullock Train'—I wish with all my heart the members of the 'Supreme Government' were obliged to travel in it for

fifteen consecutive hours!—we hire a 'palkee gharee' to take us on to the next station, Sileegoree, deciding to halt where we are during the day, and to proceed on our journey in the cool of the evening. Accordingly at 6 P.M. an oblong deadly-looking machine, resembling a hearse, makes its appearance, drawn by two horses, the pace whereof is guaranteed to be ten miles an hour, when once they have been persuaded to make a start!

To our inexpressible relief our servant arrived some hours ago, bringing with him our long-lost luggage, and whilst it is being packed on the top, the horses are taken out, something being amiss with the harness. One of them is a sturdy little animal, the other a tall bony creature, with a neck like a giraffe, of the genus *Bucephalus Alexandrinus*, with a great deal of 'spirit' in him, judging from his proud exterior, and the way he carries his head; but we soon find, alas! that this quality resides in his outward bearing only. During the process of harnessing, which proceeds with no small difficulty, requested by the coachman to take our places, we get in, and lie down side by side at full length, that being the appropriate mode of conveyance.

Six men seize the wheels, crack goes the whip, 'Whr–r–r–r–r!' shouts the coachman, simultaneously; Bucephalus assumes a war-like attitude, raises his head haughtily, and paws the air. The smaller animal pulls conscientiously, but still we do not move. The coachman performs a feat, not only of arms but legs, throwing

both over his head in utter desperation. Another crack of the whip, and Bucephalus this time backs determinedly, threatening to overturn us into a dirty pond hard by.

Chorus of men still at the wheels, 'La-la-hi-hi-iddl-iddl-iddl-whish-sh-sh!' The last syllable prolonged and hissed through the teeth. Truly the mouths of these Bengalees seem made especially for the utterance of infinitesimal monosyllables. But they prevail at last, and we are *en route*. The coachman, or chief undertaker, seizing his bugle, plays a pathetic, 'Too-too-too,' and we go on now at an ever-increasing pace, whilst the vehicle sways from side to side ominously, and we realise in an instant the meaning of the hearse, and feel we are being borne along to a speedy and untimely grave, and so on, and so on, till—as Mr. Pecksniff remarked to his charming daughters, on their way to London—'It is to-morrow, and we are there.'

CHAPTER V.

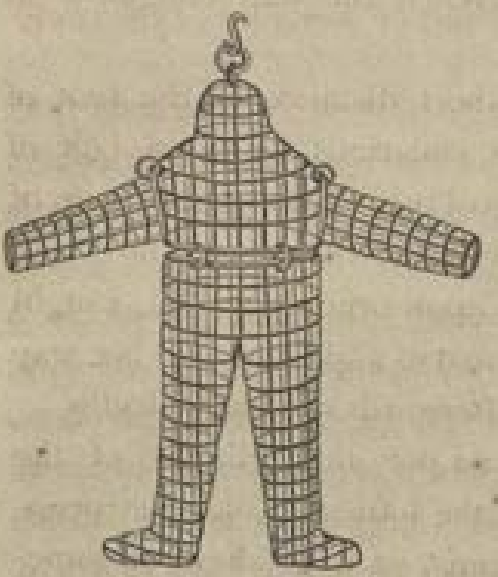
WE MAKE OUR TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO PUNKAHBAREE.

BUT although it is 'to-morrow,' for it is long past midnight, and we are 'there,' that does not mean Darjeeling, but Kishengunge; and a dismal and ugly place it truly is at this time of night.

Kishengunge, through which the road passes, is a thickly populated village, noted at one time for dacoits; and even now it not unfrequently happens that travellers, on their way to or from the Hills, are molested by these daring highway robbers. Not very long ago a British officer journeying to —— was beset by a band of them, and robbed of every stitch of luggage he possessed. Now it happened that, according to the custom of Indian travellers on these long night journeys, he had disencumbered himself of all superfluous attire, and donning his dressing-gown and night-cap, under a happy consciousness of absolute security, he laid him down comfortably, as he thought, till morning. But behold the gallant officer as he appeared on arrival at his destination!

Moral: when travelling by *dāk gharee* in India, be not over-confident, but go to sleep in complete armour, ready for any emergency.

Shortly after the commencement of his Indian career, whilst travelling in Eastern Bengal, F—— observed, hanging to a tree, a singular thing in the form of a cross, made of iron hoops, apparently rusty from extreme age and desuetude. On enquiry, he learnt that it was no less than a man-cage, an interesting relic of the past. As far as he could ascertain from local tradition, dacoits were formerly placed in it when captured, and left suspended to a tree by the roadside as a warning to others; but whether they were hung up alive and left to die a lingering death, or after they had been deprived of life, he could gain no satisfactory information: the former, however, is by far the most natural hypothesis.



We have now to descend a steep bank to a 'nullah,' or river, sixteen men, awakened by the sounds of the coachman's bugle, being in readiness to assist us, which they do by holding on to ropes attached to the gharee, to prevent its being precipitated too rapidly down the

incline; and well is it that we cross the river under cover of darkness, and do not see our ferry—a frail platform of bamboo, placed upon two canoes. But safely arrived on the other side, the same number of men push us up the bank, uttering a chorus of the most unearthly yells, and in process of time we reach the dâk bungalow at Siligoree.

Siligoree lies within a short distance of the foot of the Hills, and close to the malarious Terai—a belt of jungle, where some years ago Lady Canning, the wife of the Governor-General of India at that time, the 'Lily Queen' as she was often appropriately called, caught jungle fever from staying here one night only, on her way from Darjeeling, and soon afterwards died at Calcutta.

From this place we have our first glimpse of the snowy range, one or two of the loftiest peaks just peeping over intervening mountains, as if to show us something of the glory that lies beyond, and the view looking across the broad Mahanuddee—a shallow river, but clear as crystal—is very imposing with the dark belt of jungle at its base. We do not linger here, however, for the Terai is the abode of leopards, tigers, the wild elephant, rhinoceros, boa-constrictors, and other objectionable reptiles and fauna; and for every reason is it unsafe to pass through it—a distance of eight or nine miles—after sunset.

The road, broad and level, is enclosed by dense cover on either side. To the right, to the left, before and

behind us, nothing is seen but dense and impenetrable jungle. And this is by no means an agreeable part of our journey; for although the creatures I have mentioned are not given to display themselves to the nervous traveller between the hours of sunrise and sunset, yet the mere knowledge of their existence kept us perpetually on the alert, each movement of a branch suggesting a tiger, every rustle in the tall dry grass, a serpent.

Terrible tales are related of the manner in which natives have been attacked when passing through it at night, which they sometimes do in companies. And there was nothing to prevent their attacking us, had they been so minded, in broad daylight: but there would have been no one to describe the tragic scene, for not a wayfarer did we meet the whole distance. We passed, however, a skeleton of more than one cow, telling its own tale of midnight orgie.

Having reached Gareedura, a small village on the other side of the Terai, we found, to our disappointment, that the ponies we expected to be waiting to take us on to Punkahbaree, although ordered several days ago, had not been sent. Unwilling to delay our journey, F—— decided on walking, and after much difficulty succeeded in obtaining from one of the villagers an uncovered hackery for myself and the baggage. In the next page will be seen the interesting picture I make, jolting along the road, restrained in my longings to wrest from the driver's hand the goad with which he keeps poking first

this poor beast, and then that, and retaliating upon him with good measure for his cruelty, only by the consoling reflection that probably *they* had likewise been bullock-drivers in some previous existence, and that their turn had come at last.

Although the ascent to Punkahbaree is gradual, the character of the flora changes at almost each step. We have already lost sight of palms—those melancholy trees so distinctive of the plains—and passing by a large tea plantation, we make our triumphal entry into the little station, where there is an exceedingly nice staging bungalow, in which we put up for the night, starting the next morning for Kursiong, our last resting-place before reaching Darjeeling.

We have now exchanged the vegetation of the tropics for noble forest trees, which clothe the mountains that surround us in confused masses on all sides, and which constitute what are called the Outer, or Sub-Himalaya. Looking back whence we came, we see stretched below us a vast and almost limitless Steppe, the plains of Bengal; and the eye wanders over billows of blue mountain, each lessening in height as it nears them, till the last is seen to merge into the vast ocean-like expanse, that ceases only at the horizon.

The syces (grooms) in charge of our ponies having arrived during the small hours, we leave Punkahbaree the following morning, whilst the dew still lingers on the sward, and begin zigzagging up the steep path, between banks covered with ferns and lycopodia, shaded by gigantic trees draped with a soft net-work of *leguminosæ*, in flower, which in many instances cover their trunks completely, and hang from each branch in long filaments like ships' cables. Orchids cling to the moist bark with slender thread, their succulent leaves and wax-like blossoms contrasting sweetly with the vivid green of the moss, which often forms their bed. White and purple thunbergia cover many of the less lofty trees, the wild banana, and the spider-shaped leaves—eight feet broad in many instances—of the *pandanus* palm, whose glorious plumed head waves gently to and fro in the morning breeze; and having ascended two thousand feet since leaving Punkahbaree, we meet with oaks, birch, and

other trees, which recall to memory one's native land, and the change of climate as we proceed becomes very perceptible.

A ride of six miles brings us to Kursiong, our first introduction to which is a dismal and dilapidated little graveyard, situated close to the roadside, with no fence whatever surrounding it, the dusty, forsaken-looking mounds being hardly recognisable amongst rank weeds and grass.[1] There is always something very sad, in approaching the haunts of men, to have the truth forced upon one's mind, that wherever the living congregate, there must also be a place set apart for the dead; and although a common truth enough, it is yet one to which somehow we never grow quite accustomed. But this neglected little place impressed me with unusual sadness, containing as it does the graves of those who have died in exile in this strange though beauteous land, on which no loving eye has probably ever gazed, or tender hand has strewn a flower.

A gentleman at Kursiong, not personally known to us, but merely a friend's friend, having heard of our coming, sent a messenger to Punkahbaree to await our arrival with a letter, containing, with true Indian hospitality, an invitation to spend a few days at his house *en route*; an invitation it would have been almost ungracious to refuse, even had not inclination prompted our

[1] It was not until a year later that the pretty little church now standing was built, and the cemetery consecrated, planted, and enclosed.

availing ourselves of it, which it did in this instance, for we were both truly rejoiced at the prospect of a little rest. The house is à charming one, and, unlike those we have hitherto seen in the hills, built very much in the English style. It stands on the extreme summit of a conical mountain, backed by mountains higher than itself, covered with rhododendron and magnolia-trees, and commanding deep blue valleys on either side; but although we are now at a considerable elevation, we are as yet scarcely on the threshold of the wondrous Himalaya, and see little more of the snowy peaks than we did at Siligoree. Nor have we quite lost sight of the plains, basking in the sunshine 6000 feet below. How parched and arid they look, even from this distance! and how thankful we feel to have left them behind, as we breathe health and vigour with each inspiration. How our lungs expand and our nostrils dilate, whilst breathing these exhilirating and life-giving breezes! which enable us to realise the more fully all we suffer in the lowlands of Bengal.

Here we are initiated not only into the new delights of a blazing wood fire, but also into the far-famed hospitality of a planter's houschold, than which nothing can be more perfect and well-bred; perfect, not only because it is real and hearty, but because no *gêne* is imposed upon the guest, who is regarded in every respect as one of the family circle, there being no such thing as restraint or 'doing company' on either side. Accord-

ingly, on arrival we were at once shown into the suite of rooms appropriated to our use, a native servant soon following with a message from his master, enquiring whether, as we were doubtless fatigued by our long ride, we would not prefer taking breakfast alone in our own apartment.

In the afternoon our host proposed a canter to a tea plantation some miles distant, a proposition to which we very readily responded; and leaving the house at four o'clock, we were soon traversing a bridle path through the very heart of a primeval forest, our Bhootia ponies, accustomed to the roughness of the path, alternately trotting and cantering, their speed alone hindered by fallen trees, which occasionally lay across it; whilst we ourselves were often obliged to bend to our saddle-bows to avoid being decapitated by low-hanging branches, or entangled by the air-roots, that festoon the trees in long garlands, sometimes reaching to the ground.

After an hour's quick ride, we come suddenly upon the estate; and here the glorious forest trees have been cut down to make way for the cultivation of the tea bush, the mountain slopes laid black and bare in all directions.

A tea plantation is eminently unpicturesque, and only interesting, I should imagine, to the eye of a planter. From a distance it presents the unromantic appearance of an exaggerated cabbage garden—acres and acres of stunted green bushes, planted in rows, with

nothing to relieve the monotony of form or colour. The leaf is highly glazed, and not altogether unlike the laurel in shape, though much smaller; whilst the flower, which has a sweet perfume, is precisely like that of the large kind of myrtle, at least to a non-botanical observer. In passing through the estate we saw it in all stages

of its growth, from the fragile seedling, struggling into existence through the hard dry soil, to the full-grown shrub.

Women and children—who appear to us wonderfully fair after the natives of the plains—are employed in plucking the leaf, which they throw into long upright baskets, the men being reserved for the more laborious

operations of hoeing, planting, etc. We pass groups of patient women thus busily occupied, whilst wee babies, from ten days old and upwards, in shallow baskets made to fit them, lie speckled about the ground; placed by maternal solicitude beneath the scanty shadow of the tea bushes, each looking like a *little* Moses, minus the *bulrushes*, by the bye. Miriams, however, are not wanting, nor Pharaoh's daughters either, to complete the resemblance.

The costume of these women is very Hebraic in style, often reminding one of the paintings of Scripture subjects by the old masters. Not unfrequently they shield the head with a white or red cloth, folded square, the end hanging down the back after the manner of the Neapolitan women, or else turban-like wound *round* the head. Their dress is composed of the brightest colours, the three primaries often being seen in combination; somewhat questionable now, however, by reason of untoward vicissitude of wear and tear, but all the better for artistic purposes, yielding a gradation of mellow 'half-tints,' over which Carl Haag would go perfectly mad with delight.

In the middle of the plantation we come to a long low range of buildings, where the green leaves are rolled, dried, sorted, and finally packed in square chests ready to be sent to Calcutta for exportation. When the leaves are first plucked, they are thrown into large trays made of thin strips of bamboo, and placed some hours to fade in

the sun, after which they are more completely withered by being warmed over a charcoal fire; and are then spread out upon tables, beaten, squeezed, and crushed by the palms of the hands, till the leaves are rendered thoroughly moist by the exuding of the sap, when they are again placed in the sun, before being subjected to the first roasting process. For this purpose they are thrown into large pans, and tossed about till sufficiently dried; when they are once more rolled by the hands, again roasted in shallow trays, till perfectly crisp and dry, and the tea is considered ready for the market.

In the manufacture of the 'cup that cheers' there certainly is no lack of *manual* labour, and I think, as a tea-lover, I half regretted having witnessed the process, for it is one of those many cases in which ignorance is bliss.

Then on again by group after group of tea-gatherers, the children looking still more like little Moses, now that we have descended to the region of the waving *pampas* grass, and they are laid beneath its shade.

Having ridden over fifty acres of plantation, we have now reached its limits, and find ourselves surrounded by wild raspberry bushes laden with ripe fruit, the flavour of which is much fuller and richer than that of our English raspberry, and, being slightly acid, is not a little refreshing after the heat of the tea-house, which was almost unbearable. But how our faces and hands were scratched, and my riding habit torn by encounter with its treacherous brambles!

To vary our ride we re-ascended the mountain by quite another way, entering the forest in an easterly direction. Shadows were lengthening by this time, but the birds were singing still; amongst them the thrush, and above all others—the blessed little thing!—here for the first time in India we heard the cuckoo; upon which F—— and I simultaneously reined in our ponies to listen to it. What a surprise it was, that home note in the solitude of this great Indian forest! whilst the plaintive vespers of the little creature, making me feel how many thousand miles we were away from our loved ones in England, caused the very inmost chord of my heart to vibrate, and brought a choking sensation in my throat, which I found hard to get rid of with undimmed eyes. What glorious orchids, too, we saw that day, and what exquisite pendulous lycopodia! and how many sweet-scented wax-like flowers of the magnolia we gathered and stuck into our ponies' bridles to carry home!

At the time of which I write, there was no church at

Kursiong, and the spiritual interests of the planters and residents generally, of the little station, were left almost uncared for; the military chaplain of Darjeeling occasionally holding Divine Service there, on his way to Jelpigoree—a place he is obliged, amongst his other duties, to visit every few months.

The following day, however, being one of the exceptional Sundays, morning service was to be held in a 'rest house,' as it is called—simply an empty building with four walls roughly roofed in, and used for the soldiers to sleep in on the march to or from Darjeeling—whilst a resident having magnanimously offered to lend a harmonium for the occasion, I was asked to improvise and conduct the choir.

I had had considerable experience of the manner in which musical instruments get out of order in India, not only by the ordinary effects of climate, but also by the ravages of white ants, which not unfrequently take up their abode within them, blocking up the whole machinery by building little walls of primitive masonry, sometimes in a single night; but the prudent measure of testing the capabilities of this one in particular, before doing so in public, unhappily did not occur to me. Accordingly, when I began the usual voluntary, the clergyman's advent was ushered in first by a screech, then by a howl, followed by a deep groan, after which I gave it up in despair; but the gentleman, whose precious possession it was, rising to the occasion, at

once came forward, and performing some mysteries with the pedals, declared in a decorous whisper, that it would 'go all right now.' On the faith of which encouraging assurance, in due time I began playing a chant for the *Venite*; but the assurance proved a delusion, for the poor thing was so hopelessly gone in the wind, and was so asthmatical—it was evidently a chronic disorder—and it sent forth every now and then such groans and gasps and piteous sighs, that I once more relinquished it, and took to pitching the chants and hymns in a tremulous soprano. The daughters of our host, however, having good voices, quickly took up the strain, and the congregation, who had not had Divine Service for months, or music at one for a longer period still, and who were apparently easily satisfied, declared the singing was charming, and the whole thing a success!

To our minds, at any rate, accustomed to the exciting as well as deeply impressive Military Service of the plains—the 'Parade Service,' as it is called—there was something wonderfully quaint, unconventional, but interesting withal, in the utter simplicity of this one. The homely little building in the midst of the mountains, the people gathering together from such great distances—in some cases wending their way over ten miles of rough pathway—and their devout demeanour, somehow carried one back to the days of the Covenanters, and possessed an impressiveness all its own.

CHAPTER VI.

DARJEELING AT LAST.

It was a lovely dewy morn, that on which we started for our destination twenty miles distant, our kind host having sent a relay of ponies the previous day to await our arrival at Sonadah, rather more than half way. The road from Kursiong to Darjeeling is a very broad one, skirting the mountains, and winding round their stupendous flanks, very much like the famous Cornice road made by Napoleon I., connecting Nice with Genoa, only on a much grander scale. What azure depths and dark green sombre forests, stretching up, up to the stainless blue! How nobly the broad road winds, and how exciting it is to canter side by side as we breast the wind, which comes borne over icy regions, now not so far away!

We had not gone more than two or three miles, when we observed, on turning an angle of the road, two men driving a herd of buffalo, large bony animals, stalking leisurely along, their skinny necks outstretched, and square nostrils snuffing the air, as the manner of them is, whether indigenous to mountain or plain. As we rode up, however, instead of their passing us and

proceeding on their way, as we naturally expected they would do, for some reason or other they took fright at our formidable appearance, and wheeling straight round, took to their heels and galloped off as hard as they could go; whilst the cries of the herdsmen, and their endeavours to keep pace with them and turn them back, served but as a signal for our ponies to start off too; and away we went giving involuntary chase, soon leaving the men far behind, who kept shouting to us in beseeching accents to stop, and not drive their kine away they knew not whither, their voices growing fainter and fainter each moment, as increasing distance separated us.

From the first, I had lost all control over my fiery little steed, and it was as much as I could well do to keep in my saddle; whilst F—— having his own by no means well in hand, it would have been quite impossible to rein them in at this part of the road, which was almost level ground. At length, coming to a little path diverging from the roadway, the buffalo took advantage of it, and fled from their pursuers down the mountain side; with the exception of one big fellow, who, slightly in advance of the rest, overshot the mark and could not turn in time to follow. Infuriated at finding itself deserted by its companions, it dashed on a few paces, and then turned round and faced us boldly, ten yards ahead. Then, as F—— brandished his whip and shouted loudly, it dashed off once more, but only to return to the charge again and again; and it was 'On, Stanley, on! charge,

Chester, charge!' for more than a mile, when coming to another mountain path, it also happily left us, and was soon lost sight of amongst the thick brushwood below.

Long before we had time to recover our composure after the little episode just narrated, we were overtaken by one of those dense fogs, of which we had ample experience during our residence in Darjeeling, and which rendered fast riding out of the question. Nor was it easy at all times, even when riding slowly, to steer clear of the hackeries, and the long strings of ponies we met, scarcely more than four feet high, laden with sacks and protruding packs of the gipsy order, all of which had an uncomfortable way of rubbing against us as they passed.

Having, as we imagined, ridden about twelve miles, and accomplished nearly two-thirds of our entire journey, F—— accosted the driver of a hackery, and enquired how far it was to Darjeeling.

'*Sāt kos* (fourteen miles),' was the reply; a *kos* being equal to two English miles.

Proceeding onwards yet another hour, we saw an old pilgrim plodding along the road, to whom F—— repeated the question. After gazing intently at the top of his staff for some moments, upon which he was leaning, as though he expected to find the answer written there, he slowly counted on his fingers, like one making an abstruse calculation, and muttered in Hindustani, 'Well, there was Sonadah, and that was *tīn kos* (six miles), and then there was "the Saddle," and that was

chār kos (eight miles); and then there was Darjeeling, and that was *ek kos* (two miles), and that made *āt kos* (sixteen miles) altogether.'

'What!' exclaimed F——, lifting up his voice, 'have we then been going backwards the last hour, misled by the fog? Or are we condemned to journey on perpetually, like the Wandering Jew, never to come any nearer to the goal?'

'*Hogā, sahib, hogā*,' rejoined the old man, encouragingly, reading an expression of disappointment in our faces, and making use of that provoking idiom, so peculiar to Hindustani, which forms the vague and indirect answer to nine out of every ten questions you may ask a native, embracing as it does the past, present, and future tenses, as well as the conditional and potential.

For instance, if you ask a servant, 'Is So-and-So coming to day?' he will reply, '*Hogā, sahib*,' meaning *may be*. 'Did he come yesterday?' he will still reply, '*Hogā, sahib*,' signifying he might have come; and so on. On this occasion, therefore, *hogā* was intended to convey the consoling assurance, that although Darjeeling was *āt kos* distant yet, and a long way off, still, if we persevered, it *would be*, i.e. we should arrive there at last.

And so we did; at any rate, people told us we were there: a crowd of hackeries to steer through, and fowls and pigs and children to be ridden over, and visions of huts frowning down upon us on either side of the road, all exaggerated in the darkling mist, and a

mysterious voice proceeding from the shadowy outline of a native, telling us he was our 'bearer,' who had arrived before us with the luggage, and was waiting to conduct us to the house that had been secured for us.

* * * * * *

Standing under the porch of our pretty mountain dwelling the morning after our arrival, what a sight presented itself to our view! 'See Darjeeling and die!' has become a familiar aphorism now; and well it may, for how can I ever hope to be able to describe the awful beauty of the snowy range from this spot! Grander than the Andes and the Red Indian's mountains of the setting sun; grander than the Apennines and Alps of Switzerland, because almost twice their height; grander than anything I had ever seen or dreamt of—for what must it be, think you, to fix your gaze upon a mountain more than 28,000 feet high, rising 21,000 feet above the level of the observer, and upon which eleven thousand feet of perpetual snow[1] are resting, rearing its mighty crest into the very heavens! Overcome as I am by its grandeur and majesty, I will not attempt a description of it now, for language fails me, but leave it to develope itself as I proceed in my narrative, and the eye once grown familiar to the scene, emotion grows fainter, and forms itself into speech.

[1] The line of perpetual congelation in the Western Himalaya is about 17,000 feet above sea level, so that 11,000 feet of snow are lying upon Kinchinjunga even in the summer months; and in the winter it descends, of course, considerably lower still.

CHAPTER VII.

WE PURSUE ART UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THIS sweet little cantonment, the sanitarium for Bengal, became British territory in 1835, together with a small tract of adjacent hill, ceded by the Rajah of Sikkim to enable our Government to create a convalescent depôt for its troops; in return for which favour it agreed to give 300*l.* per annum as compensation, the Rajah's 'deed of grant' expressing that he made this cession out of *friendship* to the British Government; little thinking, in his amiable simplicity, that Darjeeling would ultimately become the key to Sikkim, Nepaul, and Bhootan, or he would doubtless have been less generously disposed.

Its native population numbers upwards of 20,000, consisting of various tribes, Bhootias, Lepchas, Limboos, and Goorkhas; the three former having originally migrated from some province in Thibet. They are, for the most part, an inoffensive and peace-loving people, particularly the Lepchas, a nomad race, natives of Sikkim, who possess many virtues and none of the vices of the more highly civilised dwellers of the plains, the Mahomedans and Hindoos.

The dress of these mountaineers is exceedingly picturesque, varying with each tribe as greatly as their language. In a climate like that of the Himalayas they are, of course, fully clad, the material being composed of some warm woollen fabric, woven by themselves in small triangular looms, after a very primitive manner. The Bhootias wear a long loose robe of some brilliant colour; brilliant, that is to say, until subdued by the mellowing influences of time, and its concomitant. This is confined at the waist by a long narrow scarf or girdle, the front of the robe above the waist forming a natural pocket, or 'opossum-like pouch,' in which they keep, when travelling, their little worldly all. I have seen one Bhootia produce from his pouch a canine mother and several puppies for sale, and another any number of cats! whilst from their belt hangs a very formidable knife, fully half a yard long, enclosed in a leathern scabbard, often highly chased with silver. A powerful, square-built, and very manly tribe, armed with these knives, they appear not a little hostile, some experience of their harmless habits being necessary, before one can feel altogether at ease in living amongst them. They are, however, on the other hand, a very wily and cunning people, with much of the Chinese nature about them; and when one of old gave utterance to that memorable and not very complimentary statement regarding the truthfulness of mankind, he most assuredly made no exception in their favour.

Very different in each respect are the gentle Lepchas,

who are truthful and honest to a singular degree, those who have had transactions with them declaring that seldom if ever have they known them commit a theft or tell a lie. Their complexion is fair and ruddy, but of that yellowish tinge observable in all the Mongolian races, and, like the Chinese, they are oblique-eyed and flat-faced, giving one the idea that they must have been accidentally sat upon when they were babies, and that they have never got the better of it since.

These peculiarities, however, are more common amongst the Lepchas of Darjeeling, for in the 'interior' of Sikkim, as I afterwards found, when we made a tour to the region of perpetual snow, they frequently possess great regularity and even beauty of feature. These people are intelligent, and great entomologists, scarcely an insect or tiny earth-worm existing for which they have not a name: but although they have a written language, they have no recorded history of themselves. They are much smaller of stature than the Bhootias, and effeminate looking, partly from the fact of possessing neither beard nor moustache, which they destroy by persistent plucking. They also part the hair down the middle of the head, plaiting it into a tail reaching below the waist. Rightly have they been designated the 'free, happy, laughing, and playful no-caste Lepcha, the children of the mountains, social and joyous in disposition.' They are, however, an indolent race, taking life easily, and when not basking in the sunshine when there *is* any, or huddling

inside their huts with the pigs when there is none, their favourite occupation is butterfly catching, with which they contrive to earn a tolerable subsistence, almost every visitor to Darjeeling, scientific or otherwise, making a collection of *Lepidoptera*, for which the neighbourhood is justly celebrated.

The costume of this tribe consists of a long striped scarf or toga, fringed at each end, with which they drape themselves in an exceedingly graceful manner, allowing one end to fall loosely over the shoulder. A bow, a quiver of poisoned arrows, and a butterfly-net complete their equipment, not forgetting the knife, or 'ban,' suspended from a red girdle, a long straight weapon enclosed in a wooden sheath, quite different in shape from those used by other tribes, called 'kookries,' which are short and curved.

The dress of the women of each race is almost alike: a short petticoat, striped with green, red, blue, and orange, tight bodice, with chemisette and sleeves of white calico, or a long white robe open down the front, and worn over all. Those of the better classes adorn themselves with gold and silver filigree ornaments, in which real agates and turquoises, procured from Thibet,

are sometimes set; whilst a tiara of black velvet, ornamented with large coral or turquoise beads, encircles the head. They also wear amulets, or charm-boxes, containing prayers and relics of departed Lamas, such as nail-pairings, &c.; and happy and thrice blessed is that fair one supposed to be—her fortune, in fact, made for life—who possesses that most precious of all relics, a departed Lama's tooth.

The Lepchas, though an indolent race themselves, do not allow their wives to enjoy the same privilege, but constitute them their domestic drudges, agricultural labourers, and beasts of burden also. They do not marry young, like the natives of the plains; and when they *do* marry often have to pay heavily for their wives, a Lepcha father frequently making a small fortune out of the sale of his daughters; some few, on the other hand, being sold for the modest sum of one rupee (two shillings). Occasionally the marriage is permitted to take place before the money has been paid; but in that case the husband becomes, like Jacob, the bondsman of his wife's father, and the wife never leaves her father's house, until the stipulated sum has been either worked out or paid in full.

The planters exempt their coolies from work on Sundays, a circumstance the latter take advantage of, by going to the market, or 'bazaar,' as it is called, to make their weekly purchases. This is situated in a large open space, where the vendors of woollen cloths made in

Bhootan, silks woven from the fibre of a worm that feeds on the castor-oil plant, grain, vegetables, and other produce, all squatted on the ground, display their wares. It is consequently always at its fullest on Sundays, when the people, clad in every conceivable colour and costume, flock to it in crowds, and, collected together, form a very interesting and picturesque scene. On one side of the bazaar is a Mahomedan mosque, surmounted with its white cupola, where the devout sons of the Prophet, who have migrated hither from the plains, are wont to resort at their hours of prayer. Above this is the convent, and beyond all, bathed in sapphire, stretches a wondrous expanse of mountain, half filling the sky.

It is one of the prettiest sights possible to see the picturesque mountaineers wend their way upwards from the plantations on their way to market, dressed in all their Sunday best, their hair often adorned with flowers. The ears of the Lepchas and Limboos have large holes in them, from the perpetual dragging of heavy silver earrings; and these they not unfrequently fill with flowers, sometimes those of the large pink magnolia, sometimes the scarlet blossoms of the cotton-tree: the women carry their children on their backs in baskets; and there

never were people, I really think, in all the world, half so merry, and free, and light-hearted as these.

Not only are the people themselves picturesque, but all their surroundings, which add not a little to the beauty of the landscape, with which they harmonise marvellously. Their brown huts dot the mountain slopes, the blue smoke curling through the thatch in graceful wreaths, whilst groups of bright-robed figures, sitting or standing about the doorways, form a kaleidoscope of perpetually moving colour. Although by no means indigent as a rule, they love to live and burrow, in tattered huts, surrounded by every kind of squalor, where they and their numerous progeny—the goats, the sheep, the poultry, and the pigs—exist in almost one common apartment, and lie down together a happy and contented family party. A pig to these hill tribes is not the loathsome, unholy, and unclean quadruped it is in the estimation of the Mahomedan and Hindoo, but their much respected brother, with whom in life they love to fraternise, and in due time, when slain, to eat.

Their abodes form perfect studies for a painter; but perhaps they never look so entirely picturesque as at nightfall, just when, the sun having set far beneath the horizon, the mountains, cerulean blue, are veiled in a dreamy haze. At such times these huts, perched on the ledges of the hill-sides, in all their rich deep colouring and ragged outline, a bright fire burning within the open doorway, form pictures indeed.

At one period of my Darjeeling career, I haunted the Bhootia village, or *Busti*, as it is called in the language of the hills, which is situated about half a mile from the station: and I may say, in strictest confidence, that I became almost part of it myself, till the very pigs began to recognise and greet me, with a contented sort of grunt, as I sketched the dearest, raggedest, dirtiest of tumble-down tenements, getting to know the dwellers, and their little black-eyed flat-faced children. At first I and my easel were regarded with the utmost suspicion—I must have the gift of the evil eye, they thought. For what other purpose could I desire to set down their ragged homesteads on paper, and carry them away with me, if it were not to weave some spell to harm them? My first appearance therefore amongst these happy simple folk ushered in a reign of terror; but as time wore on, and neither their children nor cattle died, neither did their huts topple over the precipice, they began to look upon me as an inevitable,—a grievance to be borne. Then would they come running up to meet me, as I appeared, a tiny speck on the ridge of the mountains, beneath which their village is situated, fix my easel for me, go to fetch water, sometimes even insisting on holding my colour-box, which was doubtless provoking, as were their comments upon my proceedings and presence generally: but I had no heart to repulse them. Sketching, surrounded by a crowd, even though it be an admiring one, is anything but agreeable, as all know who have tried it,

and whispers are perplexing, even though they may be complimentary.

'Ah!' one would say, the spokesman of the party, 'the mem sahib is *writing* the fence'—they always called it 'writing'—'and look! now the hole in the thatch.'

And as I dabbed in the colour, another would whisper, 'There! she's *writing* my old mocassins, which are hanging up to dry'—the representation of any of their personal belongings always appearing to afford them more than ordinary amusement. Then as I threw in another little dab of colour, and they recognised the pigeon, perched on the gable of the hut I was sketching—birds they hold sacred—or any other object of their especial interest, a subdued chorus of 'Ah—a—a—a—a!' would follow from the whole admiring crowd.

But they never really annoyed me except when, in anticipation of my arrival at their village, they attempted to tidy up the outside of their dwellings. Sometimes, whilst I was in the very act of sketching one of their huts, they could be seen all hurry and bustle, scrimmaging here and there with switches and impromptu brooms, sweeping away the delicious rubbish heaps—the accumulation of years—upon which I had set my artistic affections. Once in an incautious moment I happened to tell them I intended some day or other to make a picture of their village all in one. Their delight knew no bounds; and one morning soon after, whilst sitting at breakfast, I was told that several Lepchas and Bhootias were waiting without

to see me, where I found a deputation, headed by a stately old Bhootia woman, who begged to inform me 'the village was quite ready, would I come to-day to write it down.'

Suspecting some treachery or other, but willing to gratify them, I did start, armed with easel and sandwiches for a long day of it; but what was my horror, on reaching the brow of the hill, to find the village tidied up in earnest, and decked out as for a gala day. Some of the huts were covered with little streamers, and fresh green boughs tied to bamboo stakes; wooden palisades had been mended, and their enclosures swept and garnished; and, as if this had not been enough, they had actually whitewashed the outside of the little Bhuddist temple itself; the old dowager's hut had positively a new roof on, and she herself, decked out in all her finery, was standing at the door, vigorously twirling a 'mani' (praying machine) without stopping for an instant, evidently imagining I could, amongst other wonders, even represent 'perpetual motion' in my sketch.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CANTONMENT.

At a safe and respectable distance from all the interesting and picturesque squalor of the village, on the crest of the hill, at an elevation of seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, stand the houses of the English residents; and above these, by several hundred feet again, in a singularly bleak and exposed position, on the narrow ridge of a mountain, the hospital and convalescent depôt are situated: but how the authorities could have chosen such a spot for our invalids is incomprehensible, when the neighbourhood abounds with more sheltered sites, where a fine bracing air can be obtained at the same time.

Here they are enveloped in swooping mists for nearly half the year, which bear down from the higher ridges, or ascend from the valleys on either side. Higher, still higher, in very cloudland itself, rises Senschul, the former site of the military depôt, selected in days when even greater idiocy prevailed, as may readily be imagined when I say that this mountain, protecting Darjeeling from the south-east and encountering the first burst of wind

and rain, is popularly called its 'friendly umbrella!' Long ranges of deserted, and now ruined, barracks may still be seen from Darjeeling, on rare occasions, when the clouds open and display them to the astonished gaze of anyone who may happen to be looking skyward.

Near the station itself, the mountains are becoming more bare each year, as the forest is cut down for tea-planting; and those who would witness the glorious vegetation with which the steeps are covered, must leave Darjeeling behind, and canter through the woods with a loose rein, heedless of danger and narrow stony paths.

The banks at and about Darjeeling are thickly studded with stag moss, and the little yellow calceolaria; the latter very different, however, from the highly developed flower of the same name, so familiar to us in England. At some elevations also the sweet little forget-me-not is found, with its meek eye reflecting the blue of heaven, as well as that loveliest of all flowers, the lily of the valley; and how delightful it is to think of this still being left to grow in England, as it came forth fresh from the hands of God, and that, although we have, alas! double violets and double snowdrops, no wretch has hitherto had the hardihood and audacity to introduce to the world a double lily of the valley. I have gathered it growing wild on the Wyndcliff, South Wales; on the steeps of the Rhine; on the mountains of the Himalaya; in the gardens of the rich and poor alike in my own dear land;

yet that lowly, pensive little flower, lowly, but queenly in its beauty, and noble in its unsullied purity and grace, is everywhere the same.

Beneath Senschul are dense forests of scarlet and white rhododendron, as well as of the beautiful magnolia, and the woods here are one mass of gorgeous colour during the months of March and April, when they are blooming in all their glory. Rhododendrons attain to a great height at this elevation, and the flowers grow in immense clusters, the white species particularly—a noble tree forty or fifty feet high—the leaves of which are exceedingly thick and rigid, measuring scarcely less than a foot long. The most beautiful of all, however, is a species of rhododendron which grows *epiphytically*, after the manner of our mistletoe, and which, clinging to the branches of trees belonging to other species than its own, may be seen drooping with its weight of sweet-scented flowers, each white bell four or five inches long, and as many broad, suspended by a slender stem.

At the time I write all are in full bloom, the large cup-like blossoms of the white magnolia speckling the woods, and looking from a distance like newly-fallen snow lodged in the branches. At a higher elevation the pink magnolia grows, with its exquisite fleshy petals; and everywhere *such* ferns, just now radiant with their bright new fronds! Such orchids, ablaze with colour! Such veils of hanging moss! Such loveliness, living, breathing, palpitating around us, that it fills one's heart

with a sweet but indefinable sadness to look upon. I wonder why things that are very beautiful should make one sad. Is it because they are so fleeting, so transient? Does it not lie in the consciousness, deep hidden within ourselves, though unthought of at the moment, that 'all that's bright must fade,' and, ah me! that even whilst we admire and love things, they are passing away—fading from our grasp? Yet if we had them always, we might not prize and hold them dear, as now—who knows?

Truly earth is here decked in nature's most sumptuous garment, and the fairest and noblest works of God are seen in perpetual alternation, constituting it an earthly paradise, and a world of wonder and æsthetic mystery, to those who have eyes to see, and grateful hearts to recognise, not only the wondrous beauty in all around, but the hand of the great Architect and Artist which has created such loveliness in form and colour. Looking upwards, the majestic Kinchin cleaves the very heavens, and brings them down to meet it, whilst in everything the Infinite is unveiling itself to finite man, if he will but see it.

Very beautiful is it to watch the clouds float beneath these transcendent and eternal hills, and to follow the shadows they cast upon their lustrous surface, sparkling and shimmering in the noontide sun; yet still more beautiful to watch them at eventide, when at the 'sun's quiet hour of rest' shadows lengthen, and the orb of day, sinking behind the rugged peaks, sends upwards a flood of golden

light, bathing them in hues of amethyst and rose—then they are almost unearthly in their splendour.

To my mind and wild imagination, however, a lover of the passionate in nature, the view from Darjeeling is never so entirely grand and magnificent as after a storm. How often from my mountain eyrie have I watched the clouds, and their marvellous and ever-changing effects, when a tempest, which has raged throughout the livelong night, has lulled and sobbed itself to rest, with the rising of the sun. Huge cumuli may then be seen hanging about the highest peaks, whilst the valleys and mountains of the Sub-Himalaya are covered by a vast horizontal stratum of vapour, heaving into wild billows mightier than Atlantic rollers, and stretching right away to the snows fifty miles distant; whilst here and there a bold head of some mountain, higher than the rest, stands out in solitary grandeur, like a rocky island in the Indian Ocean, the cloud-drift blown against it half covering it as with foaming surge.

At one period of the year we actually live in the clouds, and those who wish to study cloud effects should pay a visit to Darjeeling, for they are indescribably grand; and much as the place is disliked by some, in consequence of its frequent gloomy weather, I like it on this very account. There are few natures to whom perpetual sunshine is congenial, and best do I love the days, when clouds sailing over-head throw shadows dark and mysterious over the landscape, enveloping all things in

alternate glow and gloom. What sudden bursts of sunshine and gloomy blackenings! affording a power and variety in nature's colouring, by force of contrast, that uninterrupted sunshine ne'er can give; and when a rift in the cloud admits a shaft of light, now here, now there, the whole becomes a perpetual dissolving view, and distant objects are seldom seen alike. Now that mountain peak, which we had always regarded as a vertical wall, is seen to have a lower one beneath it, as a cloud passing between it and the upper one throws it out in strong relief; now a ray of sunshine shows *that* to be a glacier, which we had previously imagined to be the shadow of a projecting rock; and so, there is no day when to me Darjeeling is not perfectly delightful; ay, even days of densest fog are welcome sometimes, for how delicious now and then to be perfectly *chez nous*, when one can settle down comfortably, feeling sure of no interruptions by the enemy from without; for who would think of running the risk of breaking one's neck over the precipices that must inevitably be passed to reach one's dwelling? And is there *anyone* who does not enjoy days of solitude and sweet home life, when one is completely alone? At any rate, I do; but then I am an 'anchoress,' they tell me, and so I love Darjeeling, not only on sunny days and cloudy days, but *all* days.

Unfortunately, ordinary visitors to Darjeeling see it at its very worst; the months when it is hottest in the plains, during which persons rush to the mountains, hap-

pening to be those of mist and rain here; but in my great love for these mountains, and anxiety to make excuse for their occasional sulky behaviour, it is consoling to remember that we once stayed at Chamonix three weeks, and never saw the summit of Mont Blanc throughout the whole period. It is not often, however, that the Himalayas treat the visitor so discourteously, Kinchinjunga seldom hiding his stately head for more than two or three days together; and when at length the veil of mist withdraws, and he is seen standing out sharp and well-defined against the liquid azure, in his spotless robe of newly-fallen snow, so glorious is the sight, that to look upon it but for one instant is worth long and patient waiting.

This stupendous mountain has been seen, when the sun is in a certain position in the heavens, to cast its shadow on the sky; and on a clear day the snow can always be observed drifting like a little white cloud from west to east, which has given rise to the belief in many persons that there is a volcano on its summit, the so-called cloud being mistaken for smoke issuing from a crater. But no one who has ever seen a distant mountain in a state of eruption would think so for an instant.

I was fortunate enough to see Etna, not only near, but from a distance, many times, in 1868, when, Vesuvius slumbering, Etna was burning on an unusually grand scale. From a distance of fifty or sixty miles its smoke appeared to ascend in rounded masses, in the form of

cumuli; so did that issuing from Stromboli, which I also once beheld in a state of eruption; whilst the appearance I have referred to, proceeding from the summit of one of the peaks of Kinchinjunga, and seen from the same distance, is more like that of dust blown by gusts of March wind, only, of course, perfectly white.

There are some things that make a lasting impression on the memory, and I shall not easily forget my first acquaintance with Mount Etna. It was one calm mellow evening that we gradually approached it. Away in the distance stretched the long dark-blue line at its base, the sky, scarlet where the sun had set, fading upwards into orange, then into yellow, then into citron and faint pink, till it terminated in greyish-blue. Standing out boldly against this, like a huge cinder, was Etna, pouring out columns of black smoke, as from an immense chimney, whilst every now and then an occasional flame appeared, resembling a flash of lightning, showing that it was still in a state of eruption.

Travelling towards it, we lost sight of it for a while behind nearer hills, and darkness had already set in, and Ursa Major appeared above the horizon by the time we arrived close under it. At this moment it was in repose, and the long red line of reflection hanging in the sky above the crater, and the smoke issuing from it, were the only indications of its existence. Soon, however, there was a sudden burst of light, and a column of fire shot upwards, carrying large pieces of lava with it.

Then another ominous lull, followed by another flash, which came so suddenly that, even as we watched for its appearing, its great brilliancy made us start. It was altogether, though a magnificent, a very appalling spectacle, the darkness at one moment so great, at another the flame proceeding from the volcano illuminating the whole expanse of firmament, whilst the heavy, lowering, confused mass of smoke hung immediately over the crater. This unusually brilliant display of Etna took place, as I have said, when Vesuvius and other volcanoes were slumbering; it consequently became the principal safety-valve of Europe, and it certainly made one realise, as nothing else could, the tremendous forces that are at work beneath the surface of this calm and peaceful earth of ours, each moment that we breathe.

This has been a digression, but the remembrance of it suggested itself, as I sat one day at my easel, sketching the western peaks, and watching this little white cloud drifting off the flanks of Kinchinjunga, and losing itself in the depths of the azure dome. I had heard no sound of approaching footsteps, and was therefore not a little startled on hearing some one close behind me speaking in broken English :—

'That big mountain *thar* is Junnoo, mem sahib ; and him *thar* is Kubra.'

Looking round, I saw a pretty Bhootia girl, spinning, apparently about nineteen, but probably younger—women generally looking older than they are, in all countries of

the East, even amongst the Hills. She continued to talk the whole time I was sketching, and when I had finished, insisted on walking part of the way home with me, to carry my easel, &c., pattering along by the side of my pony with her little naked feet, every now and then snatching a

wisp of long grass from the banks, and giving it to him to eat. She told me her name was Lattoo, and that she had learnt English when living in a missionary's family, as a child; and there I fancy she had learnt habits of cleanliness also, being very different in appearance from the Lepchas and Bhootias one sees at Darjeeling, more cleanly and refined, and in every respect superior to her class. Her features, too, were very regular, and almost European in their type; and her figure, clothed in the picturesque costume of these mountaineers, was full

of natural grace; and I was so struck with her from the first moment I met her, that it ended in my asking her to let me take her likeness.

Accordingly, the next day she presented herself for the purpose decked in all her pomps and vanities; and after this I often saw her on my solitary rambles, sometimes driving her father's kine home, which she had led at sunrise to graze in higher pastures; sometimes standing beside me as I sat sketching, prattling away in her pretty broken English, which always amused me greatly, or softly singing to herself some Tartar melody, holding the distaff in one hand, whilst she twirled the wool deftly between the finger and thumb of the other; and with her red or white 'saree' folded square over her head, a style both Lepchas and Bhootias frequently adopt, what a sweet picture she made.

The primitive spinning-wheel is yet an unknown wonder, and far too great a novelty in the art of manufacture to have yet reached this mountain-land, and the web or thread is consequently made entirely by hand.

From one of my favourite sketching-places I could just see the smoke wreathing upwards through the roof of Lattoo's hut, 4000 feet below; and emboldened by familiarity, she one day asked me to come down and see it. Her father was a man of substance, and accounted rich amongst his people, owning swine and poultry, not to say a herd of buffalo, and several cows; and a more picturesque little place than his dwelling could

hardly be imagined. It was situated several miles away in the valley, or rather gorge, of the Rungnoo, for the valleys in the eastern Himalaya are narrow and V-shaped; and this one was more than ordinarily so, the river tearing along over its highly inclined and rocky bed, between almost perpendicular mountains, clothed with dense vegetation, half shutting out the sky. A little to the right a waterfall could be seen chasing itself over moss-covered boulders down a narrow ravine, and then flowing into the river.

The hut, which was entirely of wood, and ascended by a ladder, was erected on the declivity of the mountain, one side of it supported on stakes; the roof, formed of bamboo, being thatched with the dried leaves of Indian-corn, from which baskets of various kinds were suspended. Outside the hut fishing-nets might generally be seen hanging out to dry, and a little below it, growing over a rough trellis-work of bamboo, the passion-flower trailed in the greatest luxuriance. One often meets with it in these valleys, particularly in that of the river Balasun, below Kursiong. A few upright stakes of bamboo are stuck into the ground, and others tied horizontally to them to form a roof, similar to the way the vine is trained in the south of Italy, and it is then left to grow as it will; the fruit, hanging in long yellow balls the size of an egg, being much esteemed by the natives; and very delicious it is, for I have often eaten it.

The first evening I visited this little homestead the

cows and buffalo were all arranged for milking, and the scene was pastoral in the extreme. Inside the hut, too, they were making butter and "ghee," the latter made from buffalo milk; a disagreeable-looking substance, perfectly white, but much used in India for culinary purposes. The butter, however, looks and tastes much the same as our own, and is made by a very primitive process, churns also being unknown amongst

these people. The milk is first scalded and then laid in shallow pans, and allowed to remain until the cream is clotted, and slightly sour. It is then skimmed and placed in long bamboo tubes, often four or five inches wide, and three feet deep, called 'chongas,' and these are shaken till their contents turn into butter, which is then taken to the bazaar for sale in large untempting-looking lumps.

Having once gone there, I returned so often, that my little pony, once started on the road, needed no guiding, but always turned sharply down the narrow pathway of itself, threatening to throw me sometimes, when my thoughts were far away, and I was bound for a more distant ride. But his desire to go there arose from no sentimental attachment to the picturesque little spot, but rather, I suspect, from a remembrance of certain delicious feasts he was invariably indulged in, whilst I was gossiping with Lattoo; for when I rode down to see her, she not only pressed me to take milk, fruit, cakes made of dried curd, and such things as her simple life afforded, but extended her hospitality to my little white steed also, for which she lopped branches of the large bamboo. It is true he had plenty of bamboo leaves to eat in Darjeeling, but then they were of a smaller kind, and not half so luscious and succulent as those he met with there, at so much lower an elevation. Women are often as handy in the use of the 'ban' as men, and Lattoo never looked so pretty, or her figure so entirely graceful and lithe, as when fighting with the long canes, often thirty feet in height, which, by waving first on this side and then on that, seemed like sentient things to be resisting her attempts to cut them, only that she might handle them the more. Indeed, was there ever a time when she did *not* look pretty? my poor little Lattoo.

Attracted by the interest she saw she had awakened in me, by degrees she was with me more and more; and

when I did not meet her on my solitary rides, or go to see her at her home, she would find her way to mine, and could be often seen standing shyly outside the portico, but never empty-handed. Sometimes she brought fish, sometimes butterflies and beetles, for, like the rest of the world, she knew we were making a collection of them; at other times, the ripe yellow fruit of the passion-flower, or some new wonder in orchids. At length, instead of shyly standing outside, she ventured within the mysterious precincts of the mem sahib's '*ghur*,' or dwelling, till she became quite domesticated in it, and my interest in her grew and grew till it ripened into something like affection. There was an irresistible fascination about this singular girl, and she somehow became a necessity to me—a part of the scenery, and of my happy mountain life.

Sometimes, sitting on the margin of the river, I read to her, when, throwing herself at my feet, she would listen with rapt attention. She understood English sufficiently well to feel interested in what she heard; but having been more accustomed to the stories of the Bible, she would often ask me to read them to her in preference to any others, for, related in its sublime but simple language, they always seemed to reach her understanding more readily than those of any other book, conveying with them all the force of reality. On the other hand, I found it very difficult to impress her with any degree of reverence for the sacred volume, which she regarded in the light of a

mere story book, and was convulsed with laughter one day whilst I was reading the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, as she pictured to herself the dilemma of those whose lamps had gone out, and who were overtaken by a fate she thought they too richly deserved; and when she saw I was angry, and closed the book, she implored forgiveness, and the next moment was all tears over the pathetic history of the Prodigal's return. She was a child of impulse, and had never been schooled into keeping her emotions under control.

She had not only lived in a missionary's family for some years when a child, but until the death of her mother, which took place two years before the time I first knew her, she had gone every day to take charge of, and amuse, the little daughter of one of the planters in the neighbourhood, which would account for her continuing to speak English. But since her mother's death she was miserable at home, her father ill-treating her in consequence of her obstinate adherence to a young Lepcha, whom he disapproved of as a suitor, intermarriage with the hill tribes not being of frequent occurrence: besides which he was poor; for although Lattoo's father was a man of substance, the lover's father possessed neither huts nor land, but earned a precarious subsistence by catching fish in the rivers, and selling it at Darjeeling; and Atchoo (the lover) he had contemptuously called a 'loafer,' in the vernacular, a good-for-nought, who only kicked his legs backwards and forwards in the sun.

In vain Lattoo argued that he possessed a 'ban;' and what more did a Lepcha need wherewith to begin life, to whom it was everything? With *it* he could make his own way in the world, and in time own huts and land and buffalo too, as did her father. Was it not to *his* 'ban' he owed everything?

But it happened, unfortunately for Lattoo, that a Bhootia in Sikkim, whose hut was half hidden by orange-trees and sugar-canes, on the other side of the valley, had crossed over the border, and also sought to win her. Atchoo had no money to pay for *his* bride—the greatest of all obstacles to a Bhootia father—but this rich suitor had offered to pay 400 rupees (40*l.*) down on the spot, and that sum her father, who besought her to be his, had reproachfully reminded her would pay for another herd of buffalo, and procure a comfortable independence for him in his old age. He even sent for a 'Peedangbo' (priest) to bring his 'mani,' or praying cylinder, to exorcise the evil spirit he believed must have got possession of her, inciting her to disobedience. But, in spite of all these pious efforts on the part of the priest, Lattoo would have nothing to say to him.

Marriages amongst the hill people are sometimes arranged when the parties are still children; but not so in this instance, and Lattoo, arrived at the age of maturity, had evidently determined, after the English custom, to choose for herself.

'Why should I marry a man I don't like, mem sahib?'

she said to me one day, 'just because he has a plantation of sugar-canes and orange-trees, and bhoota (Indian-corn). He brought me a bangle yesterday, all gold, as big as that; but I told him I would have none of him or his, and bid him begone.'

I had never seen Atchoo, whose name was somehow always associated in my mind with a *sneeze*, but my impression was, she did not really care for either of her lovers, being spoiled for the society of her own people by having lived so long amongst Europeans, and that she only encouraged him, as many a tender-hearted woman will, simply because he was ill-spoken of and despitefully ill-treated.

CHAPTER IX.

I MAKE A STARTLING PROPOSITION.

We had been denizens of this cloudland already eighteen months; had learnt much of the happy mountaineers and their simple lives; had eaten steaks—and very good ones too—of rhinoceros, shot in the 'terai;' had ridden through primæval forests of birch, oak, walnut, and the pink and white magnolia; had climbed its heights, and forced our way through thickets of the scarlet rhododendron; had been sometimes overtaken in these expeditions by such thick mist that it required no little squinting to see the tip of one's own nose, not to say one's pony's, and the return homewards became a perilous enterprise; had scrambled down pathless mountain sides to explore deep valleys, in which are fastnesses and rushing torrents which Salvator Rosa would have loved to paint; when the longing I had felt, ever since my eyes first rested on that stupendous amphitheatre of snow-capped mountains, ripened at last into such strong determination to have a nearer view of them, before bidding adieu to this sweet land for ever, that one evening as we were sitting cosily in F——'s sanctum over the blazing wood-fire, he

smoking, and the fog literally trying to force its way through the keyhole, I cautiously broached the idea of a grand tour into the 'interior.' Upon which he gave me a look of much astonishment, and without taking the cigar from his mouth, but speaking in that stoccato manner, so habitual with smokers, replied:

'I always knew, my dear—puff, puff—that it was useless — puff — to expect women — puff, puff — to be rational — puff, puff; but I never knew until this moment — puff—to what lengths you *could* go.'

But I saw by the twinkle in his eye, and the plastic lines about his mouth, which he vainly strove to hide, that I had only to keep up a judicious agitation, administered in small but frequent doses, to have my way in the end. And if these means did not answer, well then, I must make use of stronger measures, and bombard the citadel, for to go I was determined.

The former and milder measures succeeded, however, and it was not long before he sent in an application for three months' 'leave,' that he might travel with me whither my fancy led. The 'leave' was speedily granted, and everything now favoured my making the long-wished-for journey, across trackless wastes to the snows.

Few Europeans, and no lady, had hitherto attempted to explore the Eastern Himalaya, which, as will be seen hereafter, present greater difficulties to the traveller than the peaks of the *Western* section, approached from Simla and Mussoorie, which are much easier of access. On the

other hand, the mountains within reach of these stations are far less lofty; but we shall be travelling towards Mount Everest and Kinchinjunga—the two highest mountains in the world—the whole way, so that if Darjeeling does not, as a starting-point, afford the same facilities in the matter of roads, &c., we shall at any rate have something to reward our enterprise.

The perpetually snow-clad mountains of the great Kinchinjunga group, it must be understood, form an impassable barrier, incapable of being crossed; it is, therefore, our intention to cross the range of intervening Alps till we reach their base, and then explore the glaciers, unless the weather at this season of the year should prove too inclement to admit of our doing so.

Many were the predictions that, even if F—— returned alive, I, at any rate, should leave my bones to whiten on some mountain-top; and many were the warnings of anxious friends, who did their utmost to induce us to relinquish so rash an undertaking; but zest was only fostered by opposition, and we set about making preparations in real earnest. Moreover, we were not to go alone, for a friend, having heard of our proposed expedition, offered to be of our party, and, furthermore, insisted on our being his guests on the way, so that we only needed the requisite number of baggage coolies to carry our tents and 'impedimenta' generally, the commissariat being cared for wholly by him; and henceforth this friend will be known in these pages under the unostentatious little

initial C——, albeit a mighty potentate in the eyes of the natives of the province, whose destinies he ruled with mild and beneficent sway.

Unfortunately every season seems to be unsuited for travelling in the Himalaya. During the 'rains,' camping out is dangerous in the extreme on account of malaria. In March, April, and May it is, if possible, worse still, the whole country being enveloped in dense mist for days together. And although from October till March one can insure fine weather, and an absence of fog in the lower elevations, yet on account of the extreme cold, and absence not only of Alpine flowers, but fruit, upon which the Lepchas can almost wholly subsist, this may also be said to be a bad season; yet it is the best of any, as Major Sherwill, Revenue Surveyor, found, who travelled due north from Darjeeling in 1861. Accordingly our plans were laid for starting in November.

Having engaged a *sirdar*, or head-man, to procure coolies, and make the necessary arrangements for the march, F——, not liking to lose any portion of his leave, suggested that we should take a preliminary trip of ten days' or a fortnight's duration to the valley of the great Rungheet, and follow its silvery banks till it is joined by the noble Teesta, thence to cross the border into Bhootan, just to put our *al-fresco* capabilities a little to the test.

We were much 'exercised' at first as to the way we could best shelter ourselves by night, in the valley whither

we were bound, far removed as it is from every vestige of civilisation. During the day the shade afforded by the branches of a tree would be sufficient in a climate genial as that of the valleys, and where at this season no rain is anticipated. But on confiding our difficulties to Dr. S——, an erudite and experienced traveller in the Mongolian wilds, he suggested a leaf or 'Lepcha hut,' as it is called, believing we should find it more cool and pleasant than a tent.

A Lepcha hut is made of boughs, interlaced between and over stakes, which are driven firmly into the ground, the floor being carpeted with dry ferns and moss; and his description of it sounded so completely rural, harmonising so entirely with the pastoral frame of mind we happened to be in at the moment, that we at once fell in with the suggestion, discarding a tent, as an appendage of that effete civilisation we were so anxious to get beyond; but 'experientia docet,' and for results, anon.

Meanwhile to live in a bower! How romantic, how sweetly Arcadian! That *would* be doing the *al-fresco* with a vengeance. Already we picture to ourselves Flora and her nymphs spreading our carpet of ferns and moss, and covering us with leaves, like the babes in the wood; sylvan gods and goddesses feeding us with nectar and ambrosial food; whilst the Dryads or wood nymphs dance before us in the moonlight.

Not having seen Lattoo for many days, and wondering much the reason, before starting, I rode down to see

her. It was one of those sweet mellow evenings, when one felt grateful to be a living creature, and everything around was so exceeding beautiful and fair, that one's heart seemed filled with one great outburst of praise and thanksgiving to God: the sky was bathed in a rich golden haze, the long undulating sweep of mountain outline, cutting into it with deep blue; whilst the valleys below were sleeping in soft pale shadow. From the little huts that nestled here and there, half-concealed by trees, the smoke curled idly. All was still and peaceful, the universal hush of nature alone broken by the sound of my pony's feet, as he scrambled over the loose stones that lay everywhere along the pathway, and the musical trickling of water from tiny streamlets gliding down the forest-clad declivities, and hidden deep in perennial greeneries of moss and fern. A balmy air stirred with gentle rustle the massive fronds of the tree-fern, and swayed the long and leafy air-roots to and fro that hung from the loftier trees. Now and then peasants crept noiselessly up the mountain-side with 'chongas,' or pitchers, to a place where the stream, eddying down with greater force, was caught in troughs of bamboo; at which having filled their vessels, they returned to prepare their simple *pot-au-feu*, stooping now and then to gather wild herbs with which to flavour it; each, on recognising the '*Taswir* mem sahib,' as they called me (pronounced *taswcer*), greeting me with a kindly smile, or some such words as follow:—

'It is late for the mem sahib to write the trees. Lo! the sun is sinking, she will be overtaken by darkness.' Or,

'My *bcta baba* (baby boy) is grown big, and will sit quite still now if the mem sahib will but come and paint him; and the tree she liked is in full blossom, and the fruit of the passion flower that grows over the thatch is ripe: she must come and see it.'

Presently, however, I heard a querulous voice, which I soon recognised as belonging to an old woman who assisted Lattoo in taking care of the kine. She was talking to herself as she came along, gesticulating angrily, and her eyes fixed steadfastly upon the ground: she had not seen my approach.

'What's the matter with you, Gwallah?' I exclaimed; 'has anything happened at home?'

'Matter! happened!' she replied, looking up with a startled expression and speaking in broken Hindustani, and here and there a word of English she had learnt from Lattoo. 'Ah, well! what's the use of talking? talking won't make things different;' and then, as if unable to keep silence any longer, added:

'How can these two hands be expected to milk the beasts, and fetch water, and do all sorts besides, and at my time of life? Look;' and she exposed her poor wrinkled skinny arm. 'Is it right, I ask you?'

'But where is Lattoo? She used to help you.'

'Lattoo indeed. She's only been a fine lady since the mem sahib wrote her face, and had her up to her own

house so much, and thinks of nothing now but sticking flowers into her ears and such like, and the sooner she herself goes over the *black water*[1] and reaches Ballat (England), the better. She's no good here; and there's no good either in a Bhootia girl keeping company with a wandering Lepcha, who's never got any house to live in worth speaking of.'

And I felt that the old woman was right here, for the Lepchas seldom stay more than three years at most in one place, and are essentially a nomad people.

'But who am I to say anything?' she continued, ironically; 'the mem sahib is going down to the hut, and will see all for herself;' and with a mocking laugh and shrug of the shoulders she went on her way.

The buffalo had already been driven home, for I could see them in their shed long before I reached it; and fully expecting to find Lattoo, as usual, spinning or weaving in the balcony, I touched my pony with the whip and hastened on; but on arriving at the hut I found it empty. Thinking she might be somewhere about the place, I called to her loudly, but received no answer. Some one had been there recently, however, for the fishing-nets, which were hanging out to dry in the sun, were still wet. Climbing the ladder I entered the hut. It was composed of one large apartment, divided in the centre by a partition of matting; logs of wood were still smouldering on the hearth, and a large iron pot, containing milk

[1] *Black water* is the term invariably used by natives for the sea.

which had been scalded, and had not yet had time to grow cold, was standing beside it. In another stood the butter-milk, poured from the 'chongas' after the cream had been churned: but all this I knew was generally done by her father, and Lattoo might not have had any hand in it whatever.

Passing through the outer room, I entered the inner, by a doorway in the partition. There was her bed of dried ferns in the corner, raised on a dais of bamboo, as I had always seen it. There was the little altar with its grotesque idols supported by two rudely carved elephants, but the little things that were usually strewn about were there no longer: an old silver charm-box, which she told me had belonged to her mother, and which always hung over her bed, was gone also; and feeling by intuition that she had left home, I rode away with a heavy heart, wondering much whether I should ever see her again.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY VALLEY.

HAVING made preparations for a fortnight's absence from home and the haunts of men, we secured the services of six Lepchas to go on a day in advance, not only to construct the habitation in question, but to convey our stores. These principally consisted of hermetically sealed provisions, bread, a little stock of live *moorghees*, a supply of wine, and the universal 'Bass' —which provision for the necessities of the inner man is unquestionably very humiliating; but in these degenerate days, food for the eye and the mind is, after all, but sorry consolation to the body. Fancy 'Bass' amongst the gods! 'And why not?' broke in F——, somewhat absently, at my elbow, who had just been helping to pack these creature comforts, and despatching the men with them, we ourselves having arranged to follow at daybreak on the morrow.

And what a cold morning it turned out to be! Standing at the door of our châlet, waiting for our ponies to be brought round, we could see that the ground was covered with a thick coating of hoar-frost, which made the surrounding world, at least as much of it as was visible at

that dreamy hour, look perfectly white. The mists that invariably ascend the valleys, like the breath of the morning, to greet the rising sun, had not yet appeared, but were still hovering about the mighty rivers far far below, or lying in sleepy hollows in the mountains; and the stupendous peaks, with their miles of virgin snow, were standing out sheer, stately, and solemn, like giant phantoms against the darkling sky, where pale stars were feebly shining, as though they were weary of their long watch over the sleeping world, and were wondering how long it would be ere the sun would rise to take their place and relieve guard.

In another instant Kinchinjunga, the centre and proud monarch of them all, was tipped with vermilion; then followed other peaks in rapid succession, till the effect against the still cold and opaque sky, whilst the world beneath was also hovering between darkness and dawn, was precisely that of their having been kindled by some mighty hand, for as yet the extreme points only were illuminated, and the glaciers and vast rocky valleys of the snowy region were wrapped in that mysterious ghost-like gloom impossible to describe, and which must be seen even to be imagined. It was just the sight to awe one into silence, and after a start of surprise, we were involuntarily subdued by the majesty of the scene.

'Hush!' I heard F—— say, scarcely above a whisper, 'Do they not look like Titanic fires?'

The effect I have been endeavouring to describe is,

however, quite unlike that which, seen at sunrise on the Swiss Alps, I have loved to watch, when that tender roseate hue, like a faint blush overspreading them, gives to expectant Earth her first intimation of the approach of Day. These mountains of the Himalaya, from their exalted position in the heavens, catch a glimpse of the sun when he is still so far below the horizon, that his rays have no influence upon that portion of the earth visible to us, and before even Dawn, the forerunner, has appeared. In the universal darkness and gloom therefore that brood over all, these giant fires, against the almost sable vault of heaven, appear terribly weird and supernatural.

But as we silently stand and gaze, see! the glorious sun ascends, and each pinnacle and spire becomes irradiated with softer tints of opal, and the sky is filled with an auroral brightness, although *we* are in grey dawn still, and the silent valleys at our feet are bathed in the deepest sapphire, save where a translucent well of vapour floats calmly like a lake.

But our ponies by this time have been brought round, and are manifesting signs of impatience to be off. So we mount, and are *en route* at last, zig-zagging cautiously down the steep mountain, the crisp frosty ground scrunching beneath their feet. Leaving a forest of birch behind, we soon reach the Bhootia Busti, through which we have to thread our way. All here is still wrapt in slumber, and the men, women, and children,

the pigs, poultry, and pariah dogs, are severally dreaming of their happy hunting grounds. Sitting shivering at the closed door of one of the huts is a wretched-looking pariah. He makes a dash at us as we pass, barking furiously, and seizes F——'s pony by the tail, whilst a pig gives a grunt of approval from within. Everything seems to think we have 'waked them too soon, they must slumber again.'

The clatter of our ponies' hoofs and the yelping of the dog have by this time created a general stir. Doors open, and Bhootias, and shrivelled old women like mummies and dried potatoes, stand and look at us sleepily over frail wooden balconies. On past the little white temple, sacred to Budh, with its cluster of many-coloured flags hanging helplessly in the still morning air: on past huts tanned with smoke, so bolstered up with sticks and stakes that it is a perfect marvel how they contrive to hold together at all, their mat and mud walls so battered that one can often see through them into the very lives of the people themselves: on, till a pink family of infantine pigs stops the way, which now joins in the general exodus—'leedle peegs,' as my attendant syce (groom) calls them, proud to exhibit the few words of English he knows;—how they scrimmage hither and thither in frightened tumult, and how, in their praiseworthy endeavours to get *out* of the way, they hopelessly get *into* it, and under our ponies' feet, till at last the old sow, frantic with maternal forebodings, rushes to the rescue, utter-

ing shrill squeaky gutturals: on, till the little colony with all its dirt and apparent wretchedness is left far behind, and our ponies, picking their way—for they need no guidance, and know best themselves where a sure footing may be had—scramble down the steep path, treading often so closely to the edge, where the roughness of the way obliges them to do so, that my habit absolutely hangs over the 'khud' or precipice, and I hold my breath, for one false step might hurl me down the abyss. These hill 'tats,' as they are called, have an exceedingly uncomfortable way of hugging the 'khud' side of the path, a consequence of having, before they fell into European hands, been made by natives to carry large leathern bottles of oil, spirit, and other liquids, or sacks of grain, to and from the foot of the hills. These loads, strapped each side of them like panniers, compel them to keep to the outside of the narrow mountain pathways to get along at all, and this habit they ever after retain.

Nature has adapted the Sikkim pony peculiarly for climbing, and they canter up the mountain steeps with marvellous speed. A few days after our arrival at Darjeeling, the wife of the chaplain, who was riding up from the station by the zig-zag path that led to the garrison, reined in her pony—an impetuous little animal—too

abruptly. The pony reared, fell backwards, and was instantly killed; the lady herself, although greatly stunned by her fall, and picked up in an insensible state, happily sustaining no further injury. This was a circumstance not calculated to inspire a stranger with confidence; but it is wonderful in how short a time one grows heedless of danger in this keen mountain air, and how one loves to fly before the wind, fast riding, although unquestionably 'bad form,' becoming a perfect passion in these hills.

These hill 'tats' are often very stubborn little creatures, as well as occasionally given to inconvenient fits of contemplation, sometimes insisting on pulling up short, at the most dangerous parts of the road, as if to work out their ideas there and then; at other times, when they know they are carrying a timid rider, and one innocent of spurs—and what pony doesn't?—they will stand at the very brink of the precipice, and calmly survey the scene below. Nor is this practice so strange as it may at first seem; the Bhootias who rear them having their dwellings somewhere down the mountain declivities, they may possibly catch sight of the thatch of their humble birthplace, and be thinking with fond regret of some former happiness no longer theirs. Accustomed to climb these heights in their babyhood, like Alpine chamois, they have been known also to carry a lady down the 'khud;' but this, fortunately, is of rare occurrence, and although the sensations of the fair equestrian in the former case cannot be envied, she has only to shut her eyes, and wait

patiently till it has finished its moralising, when it will go on of itself as before.

Our way now lies through banks clothed in a rich garment of lycopodia and ferns, tangled together in the most delicious confusion and abandon of nature it is

possible to conceive—forming a bewildering maze of beauty; amongst which, here and there, if you look for it, a modest violet may be seen hanging its head, and trying to hide in the tufts of moss—that little flower, so loved and sung of by the Ancients, and treasured still, thank God, even in our own prosaic days.

All is glistening with dew, for by this time we have

zig-zagged below the region of frost, and meet with a gentle shower-bath occasionally as we brush through the foliage and the long fern fronds which overhang our pathway.

Descending further, we come upon ferns that will not grow at Darjeeling, the banks being now white in many places with the tender fronds of the 'silver fern,' the little sensitive things shrivelled up by the cold, except in sheltered nooks and corners, even in this warmer locality. Another thousand feet, and we see them growing vigorously everywhere, and although aware that we shall be in their midst for days to come, I cannot resist the temptation to stop and gather them, they are so exquisitely and irresistibly lovely. The syces, too, decorate our ponies' heads with them, to keep off the flies."

And now we have descended to the region of the tree-fern, that most beautiful of all the Himalayan flora, of which we pass many groups growing on either side of the pathway, their fronds of tender green forming Gothic arches overhead, covered with a rich tracery of parasites and delicate climbers clinging to their stems. The lower we descend the more luxuriant vegetation becomes. We now pass through forests of sol, its stately trunks covered with epiphytical ferns, air plants, and gigantic climbers, which, twining themselves round everything, hang from bough to bough, and stretching out their strong arms catch hold of neighbouring trees, till the whole forms a fresco-like canopy of many-coloured leaves. Another hundred feet,

and we observe a magnificent parasite enveloping the trunks and branches of numerous trees from top to bottom, its highly glazed leaves, fully three feet long, being pinnated like a palm. In splendid contrast to this is the lofty cotton-tree, its bark silvery white, and scarlet blossoms the size of a man's hand, the ground beneath being carpeted with soft down which is discharged from the full-blown flower.

Approaching tropical vegetation, we now pass beneath the drooping heads of the *pandanus* palm, and have to pursue our way cautiously, for the path is not only rough and narrow, but so terribly steep, that it is almost more than we can do to keep on our ponies, and I feel strongly inclined—there being no spectator—to lay hold of the pommel of my saddle, or the pony's mane or his tail, or all three together if I could, indeed anything and everything, to enable me to hold on. In one place the path is almost perpendicular, but my brave little steed takes me down without stumbling in the least, pausing now and again over the most dangerous bits of the road with a sagacity that seems something more than mere instinct, as if he were pondering with befitting gravity which is the best way to proceed. Presently I become conscious of the absence of the clattering hoofs of F——'s pony, and looking back, or rather upwards, for they seem to be impaled on the very sky, I behold him using every persuasion to induce his steed to follow the example of mine; but nothing evidently is further from its intentions,

for that noble animal has planted its fore feet on the extreme edge of the descent, its whole attitude and expression manifesting a strong determination to proceed not another inch. So refusing to be brought to terms by any argument whatever, it calmly lies down, and rolling over, gets rid of its rider without further ceremony.

F——, thus ingloriously vanquished, wisely decides to

give up the contest, remembering that 'discretion is the better part of valour;' and once more on his pony at the bottom of the descent, we zig-zag down a less precipitous part of the mountain, till a river, as yet invisible, thunders at our feet; and we soon reach the valley, where we find we have to cross a mountain stream—an affluent, I believe, of the greater river—by a very insecure bridge

scarcely more than two feet broad. F—— dismounts here, and leads my pony across; and once on the other side, we have to force our way through a forest of mimosa, familiarly called the sensitive plant in England, attaining however in these latitudes a height of fifteen or eighteen feet. As we pass, the leaves close, and the branches droop with a gentle 'sough' or sigh, making one half believe they must be living things. At each step we tread down clusters of the golden fern, which forms the undergrowth of the forest, and grows with as great luxuriance as our common bracken on English moors; and then at last we come in sight of the white banks of the beautiful Rungheet, lashing itself into spray over boulders of 'gneiss,' its surface disturbed by myriads of transparent and perfectly green waves, as it tears madly along.

This noble river, which takes its rise amongst the glaciers of Kinchinjunga, winds through a stupendous gorge, the precipitous mountains on either side stretching upwards many thousand feet, densely clothed with magnificent primeval forest, from the luxuriant tropical vegetation that skirts its banks to that which is indigenous to cold latitudes only. It is impossible to describe at all adequately the exquisite and almost heavenly beauty of the scene, or the delicate colouring of the rocks and boulders on the margin of the river, which is that of porphyry and alabaster, contrasting quite ethereally with the metallic green of the water.

We seem suddenly to have been transported into fairyland, and all is more like an extravagant dream than reality. Gorgeous butterflies of every hue are sailing in the air, or sunning themselves on the banks, where sitting with wings erect they look like little Dutch galiots at anchor, the most numerous amongst them being the large 'swallowtail' species, robed in black velvet with scarlet spots on their wings, and long antennæ. Birds in plumage of scarlet, blue, and orange, flit among the branches of the majestic sol; and a perfectly marvellous little creature, belonging to a species of lepidopterous insect, with a vermilion body, and wings of transparent and glittering emerald, hovers above and around us in multitudes, whilst the air is filled with a melodious chorus of happy creatures. But what strikes one more than all, after the great beauty of the scene, is the wondrous variety and number of living things, earth and air alike teeming with life.

The only human inhabitants of the valley are a small number of native police, stationed here by the British Government, the river being the boundary between what is called *independent* Sikkim and Bhootan.

Although our servants started an hour earlier than we did ourselves, four of them are loitering behind—viz. that very important functionary the cook, the kitmutgar, and the ponies' leaf-cutters. It had previously been arranged that we should halt here for the purpose of giving ourselves and our ponies rest, and after our exciting ride of

twelve miles of road, such as would seem absolutely impassable to persons uninitiated in travelling in the mountains of the Himalaya, we are sorely needing some little refreshment, but have unfortunately to await their arrival, as they carry with them the provender not only for the ponies, but for ourselves also. Taking shelter in one of the chowkeydars' (policemen) huts from the burning sun, F—— sends a native to shout for them, believing they cannot be far off; nor is he wrong, for the shout, which is echoed up the valley, is quickly answered, and all join us in half an hour, when they proceed to prepare our breakfast beneath the spreading branches of a tree a little distance off; for to *eat* in the chowkeydar's hut, who is a Plainsman, would be to defile and render it unfit habitation for pious Mahomedan for ever, and, temptingly cool and scrupulously clean as it is, we have to yield to the prejudices of caste.

While the kettle is boiling over a camp-fire we unpack the baskets to get at the edibles, and some cream we brought for our tea, believing that milk even, in these unpeopled regions, would be too great a luxury to expect; but, alas! it has changed its character entirely by this time, and contains, instead, a consolidated yellowish mass, commonly called butter!—a result not very greatly to be wondered at certainly, seeing that it had been subjected to a violent churning process for the last four hours, but it was nevertheless one which, in our utter ignorance of such matters, we had never anticipated.

Last evening, just as I was retiring to rest, I was told by my ayah, who had heard it from the 'bearer,' who had been told by the kitmutgar, who had seen a Lepcha woman, who had been to the 'bazaar' and learnt it from a Bhootia, who had heard it from somebody else, that a '*burra*,' (great) sahib, accompanied by a numerous retinue, was also going down to the Teesta to-day, and was moreover to encamp at the bridge. Now, these were hard lines, to say the least of it, and provoking beyond everything: my heart sank within me. Not once in three months was anyone known to seek these wilds at all, and now to think that he should have chosen the very same day that we did. Had not our men already gone on with provisions, &c., I should have endeavoured to persuade F—— to postpone our visit till this great man's return. In my perverse character of 'anchoress,' I had hoped to have the beauteous valley all to ourselves. It is true, as he somewhat sarcastically observed, we should find plenty of room; but in my day-dreams I had pictured myself as a sort of Lady of the Lake, with flowing hair. We were to be Paul and Virginia over again; but how had my bright visions faded, 'leaving not a wrack behind'!

Who can this '*burra*' sahib be? was a question I asked of F—— a hundred times, who hinted—he was in a provokingly sarcastic mood—that perhaps it would be as well to wait and see. A retinue of servants, however, suggested Eastern magnificence. Could it be the Emperor

of China, or the King of the Cannibal Islands, or—oh, agonies! worse still—one of Cook's tourists, or Cook himself, perhaps, come to spy out the land and reconnoitre for the enemy? Yes, that was it—we saw it all—we had long ago expected it. Was it likely that these beautiful solitudes would remain uninvaded much longer? Falling to sleep at length with the impression strong upon me, I was haunted by tourist apparitions. I saw hosts of them bearing down upon us: English tourists, hot and eager, Murray and alpenstock in hand; lanky American tourists come to *do* the Himalayas, singing 'U-pi-dee;' lively French tourists, shouting '*Vivent les Alpes Indiennes!*' heavy Prussians and German students, with ponderous spectacles on nose—undemonstrative but admiring, '*Ach Himmel! wie wunderschön!*' with frequent, prolonged, and deeper mutterings of '*Ja wohl!*' and '*Zo—o-o—o!*' in linked sweetness long drawn out; poetic Italian tourists, with large grave eyes, gazing in silent wonder. On they came—they came—and still they came, till the most distant tourist was but a mere speck on the horizon.

Meeting a surly-looking Bhootia woman, leading a cow, on our way hither, we enquired whether she had heard who the '*burra*' sahib was, who intended coming down to the Teesta to-day, and where he came from; upon which she stated that, for her part, she didn't know who he was, or where he came from: all she did know was, that his servants had arrived, for she had met them

on the way, and she supposed the '*burra* sahib' would soon follow.

It was but too true then; he was a stern reality, and the object of our direct hatred until this identical instant, when F——, who had been talking to one of the 'chowkeydars,' came running towards me, with the joyful news that he had assured him, on repeating the enquiry, that it was not only a '*burra* sahib,' but a 'mem sahib,' and that *we were they*; and we discovered that we had all along been afraid of our own shadows.

Considerably refreshed in body and relieved in mind, and having given our ponies a long rest, we start at noon for the Teesta, fourteen miles further on. Our path now lies along the shady banks of the river, and we find ourselves literally enclosed on one side by golden ferns, which grow to an enormous size, their stems fully three feet high, with fronds in proportion. We meet with the pretty fragile maiden-hair also in abundance; as well as a climbing fern in full fructification, with broad fronds, its tiny tendrils reaching out towards everything for support, the most perfectly beautiful thing I ever beheld. On the other side of the path, tall flags of the pampas-grass are growing between the white boulders, as well as the dwarf date palm (*Phœnix acaulis*); and this part of our ride, though more devoid of incident, is by far the most enjoyable. Not wishing to hasten over it, we gently walk our ponies, and revel in the fair scene around, each turn in the broad river

seeming to present even greater beauty than the last. Sometimes we meet groups of Bhootias, on their way to Darjeeling with merchandise, which they carry either in long baskets or bundles tied to a kursing or bamboo frame, which is strapped to their shoulders.

At length we reach the splendid Teesta, which flowing through a gorge scarcely less stupendous than that of the

Rungheet, hastens to meet it from its birthplace, the bosom of the Choma lake, in Thibet, and which is formed of melted snow. A finer sight than the junction of these two rivers cannot well be imagined. The water of the Teesta is metallic green, but turbid; that of the Rungheet clear as crystal, whilst the two may be seen to flow on together for a considerable distance, without mingling in the least, like the rivers Aar and Rhone at Geneva.

We do not linger here, however, the Teesta *bridge* being our destination, two miles further up the river, and

putting our ponies into a canter, we quickly come in sight of it. Here we are met by our advanced guard of baggage coolies, whom we despatched with stores and baggage yesterday, and one of whom we find to be a woman. But we were prepared for this, our 'khansamah,' who surely ought to have been an Irishman, having gravely informed us previously, that one of the six Lepcha *men* whom we commissioned him to engage for us, was the wife of a Bhootia; and a very fine specimen of the Mongolian race she is, her face both flat and sallow. They have not made a hut expressly for us, however, there happening to be one already at the foot of the bridge, the temporary abode of some other nomad; and here it is.

CHAPTER XI.

'FOOTSTEPS OF ANGELS.'

We are certainly disappointed in not finding the genuine 'leaf' hut that we expected, but this is quite rural enough to satisfy even the most poetical of travellers, and, moreover, possesses the additional novelty of being reached by a ladder, not of 'ropes,' but of bamboo. By way of being very attentive, our Lepchas have made a huge fire opposite to it. This small attention we would rather have dispensed with, in this melting locality; but it is, at any rate, suggestive of a refreshing cup of afternoon tea. One of the Lepchas is soon observed scaling the mountain to fetch milk, there existing a shepherd not far up, passing rich in possession of a cow; and he soon returns, bearing a quantity in a 'chonga,' which he cut for the purpose on his way thither.

We find our little habitation to be eight feet square, and raised on poles ten or twelve feet from the ground, whilst the flooring, being constructed wholly of rattan canes laid side by side, is so springy and elastic, that when standing on it, it is no easy matter to maintain one's

equilibrium, and, taken altogether, I do think it is the most amusing apology for a dwelling possible to conceive.

Whilst F—— goes for a bath where the river is shallower, I venture on the bridge. Although flowing with its usual speed, the Teesta is deeper and less turbulent here, whilst the marvellous bridge spanning it, three hundred feet long, is composed solely of rattan cane, without the aid of a single nail or piece of rope from beginning to end.

The canes of these bridges—for there are many others in these valleys—are taken from a species of *calamus*, an immense climber which roams the forest, and covers each tree, its gigantic tendrils frequently extending no less a distance than forty or fifty yards. The bridge has to be crossed singly, not only on account of its base being too narrow, to admit of two doing so abreast, but because it is considered unsafe to subject so fragile a structure to much weight. It is moreover so pliable and elastic, that a person standing at either end can make it toss up and down at will, the whole fabric vibrating and oscillating at each foot-fall. The appearance of this bridge is that of a delicate piece of net-work, and the sensations of the passenger are not only those of utter insecurity, as each fibre creaks and strains with his weight, but the sides being transparent, he feels as though he himself were being borne along at a tremendous speed, whilst the river beneath is stationary. It is undoubtedly a wonderful structure, and one that would

puzzle an English engineer to contrive ; and so striking an instance is it of the natural ingenuity and mechanical skill of the natives of the hills, that a fuller description of its construction may not be quite out of place here. I quote from Major J. S. Shirwell, R.E., who, from more technical knowledge, is better able than I am to describe it :—

'The main chains supporting the bridge are composed of five rattan canes each ; the sides are of split cane, hanging from either main chain as loops, two feet apart and two feet deep. Into these loops the platform is laid, composed of three bamboos the size of a man's arm, laid side by side ; the section of the bridge resembling the letter V, in the angle or base of which the traveller finds footing. . . . Outriggers, to prevent the main chains being brought together with the weight of the passenger, are placed at every ten or twelve feet, in the following manner :—Under the platform, and parallel to the stream, strong bamboos are passed, and from their extremities to the main chain (of cane) split rattan ropes are firmly tied. This prevents the hanging loop, or bridge, from shutting up and choking the passenger. The piers of these bridges are generally two convenient trees, through whose branches the main chains are passed, and pegged into the ground on the opposite side.'

I observe that the native police, several of whom are also stationed here—the bridge forming the connecting link between British territory and Bhootan—do not permit persons carrying heavy loads to cross it, and for

these a small bamboo raft is used, which looks if possible more fragile and dangerous still. The river is too rapid and the current too strong to be navigable, and I have been wondering how our troops managed when they marched into Bhootan, twelve or fourteen years ago. It must have occupied them a long time if they crossed it by the bridge. I forget now the cause of our skirmish in the neighbouring country, where so many of our brave fellows fell, not so much by sword as by disease. Some of them, reaching Bhootan before their tents and provisions, had to lie down on the saturated ground —for it was either during or immediately after the rainy season—and to subsist wholly on the food which they could obtain from the people of the thinly populated and hostile country through which they passed. F—— was under orders to join that expedition at one time, but his place was subsequently filled by one who, strange to say, died from the effects of this campaign. The bridge, if they crossed it, would have been the 'Bridge of Sighs' to very many, had they known their fate then. And I cannot help thinking of all this sorrowfully, as I stand upon it and watch the river flowing by.

But whilst I have been thus musing, F——, seated on the lowest step of the little ladder, has been smoking the pipe of peace, taking silent interest apparently in the cooking of the dinner, gipsy-like over the camp-fire, whence bubblings and frizzlings full of savoury promise reach me even at this distance, indicating com-

pletion at no remote period. In half an hour's time I bend my steps in the direction of our 'shanty,' and meet the kitmutgar, who as usual, *en grande tenue*, informs me with the state and dignity with which a well-bred Oriental always makes the important announcement, that —*khanā tiayar hai* (dinner is served).

Approaching the hut, I can already see F—— through the open cane-work, seated on the floor like a regular native, everything spread round him in convenient order. But no sooner have I ascended the ladder, and entered the aperture with an incautious bound, quite forgetting the elasticity of the floor, than each viand hops off its own dish on to that of something else, and all is dire confusion. The chicken which he was prepared to carve with the ceremony that befitted the occasion, takes refuge in the bread-plate, a bottle of claret empties its contents into his wide-awake, which he had thrown down beside him, whilst a shower of small missiles flies into the air. Nor is it easy to restore tranquillity, for no sooner is one erratic viand rescued, than another has flown off in a different direction. A game-pie—the supreme effort of our *chef*—on which we had set our longing hearts, had disappeared entirely, and with divers small comestibles was simply 'nowhere;' but the chinks in the floor affording a charming bird's-eye view of the sandy beach below, we can discern the salt spoon calmly reposing in a pool of claret in the hollow of a stone. The pie, however, and the other missing articles we do not discover till the close of the repast,

when they are dug out of a heap of baggage baskets in a corner, very cobwebby, and generally the 'worse for wear.'

Notwithstanding these discouragements, however, our dinner was anything but a fiction, and the exercise we had in capturing the fugitive dishes only gave additional zest to our appetites.

As we sit here, it is interesting to watch the natives cross the bridge, which they do at frequent intervals.

Some, blindfolding themselves first, *feel* their way across, lest the height and rushing water should make them giddy; and what singular Chinese-looking men they are, with their long pigtails, and petticoats of amber, and crimson, and green; they look wonderfully like figures on an old-fashioned tea-tray, and are, I imagine, Chino-Thibetans.

Having started so early in the morning, we resolve to *retire* early, if that can be called retirement, where

everything but the stars can see us; and I am not sure that one of these even is not peeping through a hole in the thatch, for, be it known, our charming little abode is open on all sides but one. Vide illustration. The heat is exceedingly oppressive, however, so that perhaps after all it is a wise arrangement. On two sides of the hut bamboo shelves had been erected two feet from the ground, and as many broad, like berths in the cabins of a ship. On these our little camp mattresses are placed, and, simply throwing rugs around us, we recline upon them.

As soon as we extinguish the candle, which in true 'camp fashion' is standing in a bottle of departed 'Bass,' looking, from its limp and idiotic appearance, as though it had partaken considerably of that beverage itself, the sweet moonlight streams in upon us through the dried palm-leaves, which hang loosely over the roof of our little wigwam like a fringe, and which the wind softly stirring, rustles with a soft dreamy noise. Delightful is it to listen to the roar of the river, as it tumbles foaming over boulders in the distance, and to be lulled to sleep by its soothing ripple, as it laves the banks immediately below, the fragrant air sweeping over us the while.

Everything has a calming influence, half mesmeric, and I am just in that transition state between waking and sleeping, carrying thoughts of Longfellow's Evangeline and Hiawatha with me into dreamland—of which these surroundings forcibly remind me—when I am startled by

some large bird flying through the hut, making it vibrate with the flapping of its wings. After this I lie awake a long time, filled with an uncomfortable sensation lest it should return, and listening to a night-bird that has just begun its plaint, which uttering a continuous wailing cry, sounds particularly mournful amidst the general stillness. But its monotony at length lulls me into deep slumber, and it, with Evangeline and Hiawatha, and 'Minnehaha, laughing water,' is alike buried in the sweet oblivion of Lethe, when I am again aroused by numerous bats, flying backwards and forwards, and beating themselves blindly against the sides of the hut. I am just beginning to put up with them as part of the programme when, ugh! two, swooping down, actually fan my cheeks with their wings. This is more than I *can* bear, and I subside beneath my rug.

Slumber henceforth is out of the question, for besides all this, every now and again, native travellers pass close by to cross the bridge, making stealthy and suggestive noises on the elastic cane-work with their naked feet; and I cannot help thinking that it *might* have been as well, had there been some kind of door, or enclosure, to the entrance of the hut. Moreover, the existence of the ladder fills me with vague apprehensions, and a sensation familiarly known as the 'creeps.' At these moments I can fully appreciate and sympathise with Robinson Crusoe's motive in dragging *his* up after him, but ours happens unfortunately to be a fixture.

Then as night wears on—as though the visitants, real and imaginary, which I have already enumerated, were not enough—water rats come scrambling up the poles, and get not only into the hut, but make a violent raid into the provision baskets, where I plainly hear them scratching and nibbling the paper in their attempts to get at

the stores, failing in which, I am in an agony lest, in a fit of disappointment and rage, they should take to our toes.

Not liking to awaken F——, I whisper a soft 'Shish! shish!' at which they scamper off as fast as they can go; but presently I hear the 'patter, patter, patter' of their little feet on the cane floor, and know they only retired

with precipitation, to return again as soon as all was quiet. Finally, alighting amongst a lot of plates, they do at last startle and arouse him, and then what a scuttling there is, when, regardless of consequences to the cups and saucers, he hurls his boot at them; and how they rush about, becoming so hopelessly frightened that they cannot find exit; one big fellow springing upon a baggage basket, where it gets so paralysed with terror, that it remains there without moving, and looks so horridly human in its distress, that I quite feel for it; but F—— gives it with his remaining boot a knock that sends it flying backwards through the hut, whence it falls on the stones below with a 'thud' that I suspect settles its destiny for ever.

Close to the place where my head reposes, but outside the hut, is a nest of mice, from the tiny cadence that reaches my ear perpetually. They are evidently engaged in very animated conversation, our invasion being probably the subject of it; and I long for daylight to have a peep at these interesting little pilgrims of the night.

CHAPTER XII.

NOONTIDE IN THE TROPICS.

At length dawn arrived, as it always will 'if you wait for it,' as that astute philosopher Whyte Melville tells us, and whilst F—— still slumbers, I rise, glad to make any change after the tedium of the weary night. The first thing I do is to search in the direction of my supposed little family of mice, when I discover that they are in truth not mice but *bats*, which have made themselves a snug eyrie beneath the thatch. They are all young and not yet able to fly, but they flutter their clawed wings painfully as I gaze at them. They would appear to have been deserted by their parents, who are probably frightened away by our unexpected advent. I watch them for a long time, studying the social and domestic habits of these little mammiferous creatures, and by the time we leave this 'happy valley' I shall no doubt be able to add considerably to the science of natural history!

Descending the ladder, I stroll down to the river's banks. The ripples, fanned by the faint morning breeze, roll over the glittering beach, and gently lap the snow-white stones on its margin. A silvery mist hangs over the valley, concealing the mountain tops, but is slowly

rising, and as it does so, it gets held in detached fragments by the branches of trees that cover the steeps. As we ascend higher and higher, what exquisite bits of soft hazy distance are opened out to view, where the winding river loses itself behind blue mountains! The air is filled with fragrance, and dew-drops hang from every leaf and spray, whilst tender lights, glinting here and there through the white pall of vapour, flash and quiver on the tremulous water. A party of natives is already being pulled across on the little raft I have before mentioned, carrying quaint-looking loads on their backs. I watch it weather the rapids in mid-stream, and reach the opposite shore some distance down the river, for the impetuous current bears the raft along with it, and it is impossible to cross in a direct line. The little band of travellers, bound for Thibet, I imagine—for one soon learns to distinguish each tribe by its costume—toils up the steep zig-zag path: now I see them, now lose them again, as they get hidden behind trees; then higher, where the forest ceases, I watch them climbing like a 'string of many-coloured spiders,' till they are lost at last in the shadowy distance. Close to the place where I am standing, a bear and two leopard skins are spread out to dry, a fact very suggestive of the *living* presence of these creatures in the jungle around us. They appear to have been shot recently, and no doubt were killed by the chowkeydars a day or two ago, all of whom, I see, possess fire-arms.

An hour later I have the satisfaction of seeing our

breakfast cooked over the camp-fire, consisting of an omelette, and the chicken of our dinner 'of discontent made glorious' in a *réchauffé* of some sort. Not a little amusing is it to see the heterogeneous collection of articles pertaining to the mystery of his art, from a refrigerator to a toasting-fork, which our cook has thought proper to bring with him, to meet all the exigencies of the journey. We did not think it necessary to bring his assistant with us; but, as he appears to think himself too dignified an artist to condescend to the menial part of the preparations, three Lepchas, crouching round the fire, looking very amiable, but inexpressibly dirty, as I am sorry to say they always are, officiate under his direction. Summoning up courage, I remonstrate fiercely at these proceedings, in the most commanding Hindustani I can muster on so short a notice, but failing to make myself intelligible I give it up in despair, and have no doubt whatever that on the occasion of the breakfast—the result of their united efforts—we get through a large portion of that element, of which each person is said to have a 'peck' allotted to him in the course of his existence. Be this as it may, we did ample justice to the repast, and found no cause to complain of the flavour of the *menu*, which we thought was unusually savoury, whilst everything about us formed such a contrast to our every-day experience, that things which would be esteemed as hardships ill to be borne elsewhere, were here but a new delight.

We had just completed our repast, when an officer from Darjeeling came riding up, with a guard of armed Goorkhas, on his way to Bhootan, to endeavour to discover the perpetrators of the murder of a British subject, which has recently taken place there. He gladly joined us at our repast, after which we watched him and his guard cross the bridge one at a time, the ponies being made to swim the river, whilst three men standing at the opposite side, pulled them over with rattan ropes.

And now we sally forth ourselves, F—— shouldering his gun, and I his butterfly-net, and we wander back to the junction of these two great rivers. Just here the gorge widens, and the mountains are less precipitous, but all are densely clothed with vegetation to their very summits. How wonderfully ethereal all looks in the pure morning light! the delicate pinkish white of the sand, as well as of the rocks and boulders, which reflect themselves in the water, and cast pearly shadows on the shore, combining to create an effect quite opalesque, and one that is indescribably refined and beautiful.

The fog has disappeared entirely by this time, but there is a *soft* thin haze hovering over everything that lends sweet mystery to the scene. Here we halt, and I essay to make a sketch, whilst F——, stretched at full length by my side, smokes the calming weed, and occasionally reads aloud. But all is not as peaceful as might be wished, even in this heavenly spot, for he soon finds that he has all along been reclining upon an ant-hill, and the

little, or rather *big* creatures here—for they are fully half an inch long—are hurrying about in all directions, each with an egg in its mouth almost as large as itself, stopping now and then to have a word or two with a neighbour on the signs of the times; and then gathering up their eggs, they scamper off again as hard as they can go. Peepsas too, an almost invisible black insect, sit upon our eyelids, and raise pustules wherever they attack, causing great irritation. Bees, attracted by the sweetness of my moist colour-pans, get caught in these miniature bogs, where they make a woeful buzzing, and then leave their legs behind; whilst flies, which later in the day insist on having an undue share of our lunch, walk serenely over my mountains, and make blotches in my sky.

But all these together are, to my mind, as nothing to a sketcher's oft experience in England, where, sitting silently at your easel in a field or country lane, you are suddenly startled by a hot moist blast behind you, and, looking over your shoulder, behold an erratic cow, which having watched you intently over a hedge for a long time—cows always are such inquisitive creatures—breaks through it in a vulnerable part, and then determining to have a nearer view, wanders up to see what it is all about, followed slowly by the whole herd, each as it passes blowing on your sketch, threatening to overturn your easel, and keeping you in mortal terror all the while.

The ingenious Lepchas, however, who accompanied us to carry my sketching apparatus, rising to the occa-

sion, cut down branches and fan us with them, to keep off the little pests I have before mentioned; and as the sun ascends above the summit of the gorge, they lop more branches, and with their useful 'bans,' ever at their sides, form an arbour for us where we sit, sheltering us completely. Then I send them off and away, into the distance, with instructions to sit upon the white trunk of a tree, which has become stranded on a bit of sandy beach yonder, where they come in very prettily in my sketch.

This done, we clamber up the mountain, through tangled brushwood, veiled with creeping ferns and a soft network of loveliest green; our ponies scrambling after us with much ado, dislodging pieces of rock and loose earth, and hurling the débris upon the luckless heads of those who happen to be in the rear. Then F—— goes roaming with his net amidst the trees in quest of butterflies and insects; and tired by my climb, and wishing to rest awhile, I recline in a shady nook, and watch the ponies, dainty things! grazing, or pretending to graze, off golden ferns, a few paces from me.

Looking upwards, attracted by the jubilation of happy birds, I observe that each branch and stem of the tall forest trees is deeply fringed with hanging moss, the appearance of which is very singular, but exceedingly lovely withal. And now the sun, rising higher and higher, finds its way through thin places in the foliage, and obliges me to seek for deeper shade, for the heat grows oppressive: the birds cease to carol amongst the branches,

and the insects to hum; the breeze falls to sleep; the leaves whisper together no longer, and noon soon folds all Nature to slumber on her warm breast.

Those who have witnessed noontide slumber only in our own land can but faintly realise the strange stillness and great universal 'siesta' of the Tropics, where at other times throughout the day the air is filled with bird and insect life. No sound is heard but the distant roar of the river, and now and again that of a little bird making a soft dreamy twitter, as it tucks its head more tightly under its wing, or a gentle rustle in the dry grass caused by a lizard peeping out of its hole, perhaps to see what time it is, and then going in to sleep again. The lizards in these valleys are not green, but gold and bronze —metallic-looking little fellows, with coats of brightest mail. Another faint rustle, and a small grey squirrel, with its brush striped with black, darts up the tree close beside me; and then all is still, till an hour later, when a footstep approaches, and F——'s cheery voice awakes me from my reverie: he returns, after securing one or two valuable additions to his entomological collection; but the poor little captives fluttering about in the cruel net are a sight I never like to see.

And now, repairing once more to the banks of the river where the shade is thickest, we sit and listen to the music of its roar. Presently, a short distance up, on the opposite side, a deer emerges from the jungle and swims across—a 'barking deer' I imagine from its size, with

which these forests abound, so called on account of its uttering a short shrill bark, slightly resembling that of a dog; and when shadows begin to lengthen, we saunter back again to our shanty, ankle deep in sand, the pinkish colour of which is said to arise from the presence of minute atoms of garnet, of which much is found in the rocks.

On our way we met, and were addressed by, a good-looking young Lepcha, carrying a net upon his shoulder, who described himself as a butterfly-catcher. Would the sahib engage him for the time he was in the valley? he might remunerate him as he pleased, and he would capture as many as possible for him. There was something so soft and pleasant in his manner, and he seemed so anxious to be employed, that F—— engaged him at once, and told him he might join our encampment as soon as he chose.

By the time we reached the bridge, both it and the river were shrouded in gloom, but the sinking sun was gilding the mountain tops with burnished splendour. How beautiful it was to see the blue shadow, like a thing of life, slowly ascend the gorge, inch by inch, as the sun sank deeper and deeper below the hills, sending upwards a gush of roseate and golden light! We watch the rainbow tints to westward die out one by one, and then the moon glides up behind the tree-clad summit of the mountain, and pale stars peep forth from the purpling sky, their brightness alone dimmed by the lustre of the greater light.

There is, as all know, very little twilight in these latitudes. As the sun sets, all signs of day quickly fade, and the moon on rising shines with a brilliancy and glory impossible to be imagined by those who have only seen it in our more northern hemisphere. After our rustic repast, which on this occasion we partake of al-fresco, we cross the bridge, and stand for the first time in Bhootan, and looking down upon the river, upon which the moon shines like a path of silver, we think we have never seen anything so lovely as the scene. The woods on either side are thrown into the very blackest shade, the jagged outlines of the mountains standing out sharp and clear. Half-way up our Lepchas' little encampment is situated, and their fire burning brightly gleams like a beacon-light. Below, close to the water's edge, as if placed there to enhance the beauty of the scene, is a picturesque hut. Some natives inside have lighted a fire, which, sending up a lurid smoke, contrasts curiously with the cold moonlight; whilst the glare of the fire reflecting itself in the river, and the natives' dusky figures against it, throwing grotesque shadows, produce a wonderfully Rembrandt-like effect, and the whole forms a picture so exquisite, that even Turner, in his most extravagant moods, could scarcely have idealised it.

We sit long in the balmy air, drinking in its evening freshness as it comes wafted towards us along the valley; whilst the moon, which looks down upon us with her tranquil placid face, rides majestically in the star-

bespangled heavens. All is peaceful, and a feeling of intense tranquillity and happiness steals over us, in harmony with the surrounding scene, and the perfect solitude and absence of the din of tumultuous life. We seem cut off alike from past and future, poised as it were in some intermediate present, that bears no part in our real lives; and wishing I could but hold it fast, I pause, and wonder whether, as it passes, I suck out all its honied sweetness.

But already deep schemes and dark designs are being laid for a railway from the plains to this lovely valley. O ye shades primeval! *figurez-vous* a troop of English engineers invading thy fastnesses, and the shrill practical whistle of a locomotive resounding through thy solitudes, which may heaven beneficent forfend!

By this time the swarthy natives in the little hut below, having cooked and eaten their evening meal, are fast asleep, their recumbent forms just visible in the flickering firelight; whilst the crackling of the wood as it slowly burns away, the soft lap-lap of the water as it gently laves the banks beside us, and its more distant roar, are the only sounds that break the stillness, and make it live, except now and then the melancholy chaunt of a Lepcha, proceeding from their encampment above, abrupt, fragmentary, and always in the minor key. But a little later, this too gradually subsides, as wakefulness gives place to slumber, and the night-bird once more begins its plaint.

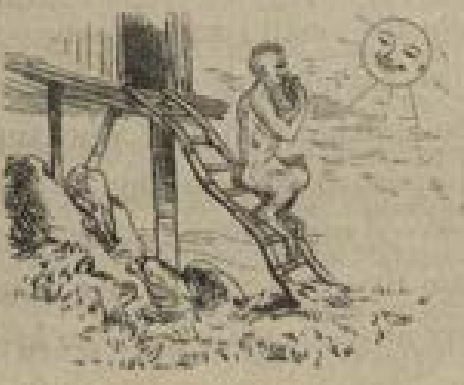
Then, before retiring ourselves, we improvise a door

to our habitation. During the day, branches had been thickly interlaced to cover the apertures on all sides, in the hope of excluding our visitors of the previous night. Besides this, the Lepchas with ruthless hand had routed out my little family of bats, for on my return this evening, I descried the lifeless bodies of the slain lying on the sands below, which had all the appearance of a miniature battle-field.

There would consequently seem to be a probability of our obtaining a better night's rest, and I lie down with something like a feeling of security, listening, however —for who could help it?—to a native in the distance, who, provoking wretch! having had his own first sleep, now turns night into day as the manner of these people is, and, musically inclined, begins playing a rather lively air on a little pipe or flute, which these hill people rudely manufacture from the small bamboo cane.

From the direction of the sound, I imagine it must proceed from the amiable shepherd who supplies us with milk, and who is perhaps serenading us from his sylvan retreat, as Pan of old might have done. I fall asleep at length, and dream that that god of herdsmen, horns and hoofs, in orthodox array, is sitting on the ladder, while he endeavours to enchant Selene, goddess of night, with the music of his reeds. So near sounds the pastoral melody in my sleep, that either it or my dream awakes me; but all is still, and I hope devoutly that our shepherd's pipe is put out for the remainder of the night.

Sleep, however, except of the most disturbed and intermittent kind is out of the question, for, in spite of our precautions, water-rats invade us in as great numbers as before, finding their way through the interstices of the floor, which it did not occur to us to stop up. We therefore pass another very warlike night in hurling at them all the missiles on which we can lay our hands; but do not succeed in routing the enemy, who reinforce themselves perpetually. At last, worn out by our exertions, we surrender, and rolling ourselves up in our respective rugs, make a strong mental resolve that it shall be our last night's acceptance of the inhospitable shelter of this little roof-tree, and that we will make other arrangements for the morrow.



CHAPTER XIII.

WE CHANGE OUR QUARTERS.

OUR people's encampment was situated about 300 feet up the mountain, where overhanging rocks formed their only shelter. Thither F—— hied at peep of day, whilst the remembrance of the night's miseries was still fresh upon him. It was a stiff climb for a lowlander to accomplish; but once there, having chosen a spot that appeared suitable for the purpose, he ordered a leaf-hut to be made without delay. Having their materials everywhere around them, all were soon engaged in lopping branches and preparing stout bamboo stakes for poles, the trunks of two trees answering the purpose for the back of the hut, against which smaller bamboos, placed horizontally, were tied together with the tendrils of climbers, which hung from each tree in long serpent-like coils. Between all, boughs were tightly interlaced; and in little more than two hours' time, a habitation, about as comfortable and snug as one could desire in these latitudes, was not only built, but furnished with little benches and tables made of bamboo, split into pieces, till it had quite the appearance of a permanent abode.

The many uses to which this tree is applied by the natives of India, forcibly remind me of the cacao-nut palm of Ceylon. 'Man wants but little here below;' and a happy pair of Cingalese have only to 'squat' under half-a-dozen cacao-nut trees, to find all their wants supplied. Its fruit forms their meat and drink; its leaves roof their hut; from its fibre they weave a fabric which clothes them; the shells of the fruit form both their drinking and cooking utensils; from the bark of the tree, sewn together, they construct little boats, in which they paddle about the swamps, and snare wild-fowl. And so with the bamboo. The Lepchas can almost subsist on the young shoots, which they stew in one of its own tubes: it forms, in some shape or other, their entire abode. By rubbing two pieces of it sharply together, they produce fire; paper is made from the leaves and sheaths, after they have been steeped in water and reduced to a pulp; from the canes, split into thin strips, baskets of various kinds are made, and a hundred other things; there being scarcely anything for which it is not used.

Our leaf-hut proves not only more comfortable, but even more picturesque than the little one we have deserted, on the roof of which we look down, whilst our present view is far more extended, and everything around is passing lovely, calm, tranquil, and serene. Some little distance along the side of the mountain, whither I soon wandered, a view of the Junction could be obtained;

and it was curious at this distance to observe the line of demarcation between the waters of the Rungheet and those of the Teesta, the one so transparent and green, the other so milky white. Very wonderful to look down upon was the meeting of these two great rivers, which tear along in different directions, and then join in one. How the ancient Hindoos would have fabled them in their mythology!

Here I decide to take up my position for the day and sketch, whilst F——, who is suffering acutely from lepidoptera on the brain,—accompanied by the butterfly Lepcha, starts immediately after breakfast, armed with his net for a long roam through the Teesta valley. The air is cooler here, and insect life consequently less abundant; but the flowers, on the contrary, are increased tenfold in number and beauty, many of the climbers and orchids being in full bloom. One of the former hangs in large clusters of snowy whiteness above my head, with thick cup-shaped, wax-like petals, filled with luscious perfume, together with another of the *leguminous* order, not unlike the Wisteria in form, but of richest crimson, hanging a foot and a half in length. Bees are abundant, although peepsas and insects of the smaller kind are absent; but finding more honey than they did in the valley, they do not so determinedly invade my moist colour-pans in search of sweetness, and having over-eaten themselves long before noon, lie dozing in the flower chalices, where they keep up a sub-

dued but contented brm, brm, brm, as though they were snoring. Dragon-flies occasionally play at hide and seek, but do not trouble me, with the exception of one intrusive fellow, that flits about my block; but I smite him on the head with the handle of my brush, at which he gets him away right humbly. There was, indeed, such a gush of loveliness around me all the day, that I felt I could sit and breathe my very life away, it all seemed so heavenly.

What a beautiful world is ours! Who would think—not knowing—that it is so hard and sad a one, for some to *live* in. Ay, hard and sad. A world where there are rocks ahead, and unseen reefs, and adverse winds and tides, and stormy breakers, all too mighty for the frail little crafts that are sometimes launched upon its tempestuous ocean, and 'whose waters of deep woe are often brackish with the salt of human tears.' Cannot one read it in the countenances of two out of every six persons one meets, where the whole is written in deep lines as in a chart? There are the 'tackings' to and fro, the adverse winds and tides, those days of doubt, despondency and gloom, when they could take no bearings; for their sun was dimmed in heaven, the moon gave no light, and the very stars refused to shine—those 'fourteen nights' of agonising suspense, when they 'cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day;'—those stormy weeks when the little vessel was driven up and down before the wind, under double-reefed topsails;

those days when, with rudder tied, she was 'hove to' in a gale; that awful moment when she grazed a rock, which did not wreck her quite, but stunned and struck her backwards with such crushing force, that each plank quaked and trembled from stem to stern, followed by that ominous pause—that lull, worse than the shock itself, ere she rose once more, and went bounding over the billows. There are the days, too, when the breakers heaved so high, that they broke over her decks, threatening each moment to swamp and bury her in the deep; and there is that one great cruel wave which swept all before it, and did well-nigh engulph her, carrying with it her 'tackling'—the little nothings, 'trifles light as air,' round which some sweet remembrance clung, it may be, of days now long ago, that pet thing, that idol, dearer far than life itself—all, all torn from it, washed away, leaving it a sullen, gloomy-looking hull, to float on with bare poles for evermore. Then that hurricane, when she became almost a wreck, and was 'picked up,' rescued, towed in by another vessel passing by—saved by the outstretched hand of a friend, or by a Mightier than human hand; for an Unseen Guardian was standing at the prow, leading it through waves of sorrow into that haven where it 'would be,' gathering it into that anchorage, both sure and steadfast, where there will be no more tossings to and fro, for 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' Oh! never do I see a dear old weather-beaten, wrinkled, time-worn face,

but I think it is man's own log-book, of which he himself holds the key.

And sitting here busily sketching, I was led to ponder much on the manner in which things animate take their tone from external nature, and of the great universal harmony which exists in every thing, and how different, for instance, is the merry chirp of the feathered tribe, flitting about in the sunshine, to the dolorous plaint of the night-bird. Then the dreamy hours of noon-tide falling, I, too, subsided at last into what F—— calls one of my 'brown studies,' whilom thinking of Lattoo, whilom of nothing at all, when that little angel's wings suddenly appeared before me.

'Why, Lattoo!' I exclaimed, 'where have you sprung from, and why in the world did you come all this way to see me?' For she looked hot, and tired, and dishevelled and out of breath, and must, I imagined, have walked at least twenty miles to find me.

'Not far, mem sahib, not far,' she replied; 'me come down by that mountain, and through that *watter thar*.'

And then, on her recalling it to my remembrance, I recollected having passed a broad stream on our way to the Teesta junction, the day we arrived, which no doubt was the Rungnoo; and she had probably only walked a few miles, these mountains and valleys being very puzzling to those who are ignorant of their windings.

She had been over into Sikkim, to her mother's sister, she told me, and on her return last night, seeing Atchoo,

who had been to Darjeeling, and heard where we were, had decided to come down at once, not only to see me, but to supplicate to be taken into my service as ayah, for the purpose of accompanying me on our long journey to the 'interior.' In explanation of her sudden disappearance, she confided to me the fact that there had been a great *tumasha* (row) at her home. One night the bears had come down and eaten the young ears of Indian corn, and otherwise injured the crops; and Atchoo happening to be 'loafing' about, at an inopportune moment, the old man, unusually irritated, had kicked him off the premises, calling him opprobrious names, an indignity Lattoo resented on his account, and father and daughter came to high words, upon which she determined to leave home for good; but relenting—for this singular girl could be as ferocious as a young tigress at one time, and as gentle as a gazelle at another—she returned, all sorrow and repentance, on the eighth day of absence.

'How soon are you going to marry, Lattoo?' I enquired, still going on with my sketch.

'Marry, mem sahib, marry! How can me marry?'

'Well, you are surely engaged, or betrothed, or whatever you call it in your language. Atchoo thinks you will marry him some day. You would not deceive him; he loves you, Lattoo.'

'Yes, he loves me; poor Atchoo!' she rejoined, pensively.

'And do not you love him too?'

'Yes, mem sahib, *sometink*, but my *fadder* he kill me, if I marry a Lepcha man.'

This, doubtless, was conclusive, and I said no more about the matter. She assured me, however, that her father had given her permission to ask me to engage her as my ayah; but fond as I was of her, I must say I had very strong misgivings as to whether she would make a good servant. Moreover, I did not intend to take a maid with me, although I anticipated great inconvenience in the absence of one. I believed I had no right to subject another woman to the hardships of road and climate to which I had voluntarily committed myself; and to do so would necessitate considerable additional expense, involving an extra tent, as well as obliging us to furnish her with some mode of conveyance. But here was one who proposed taking all the risk of the journey upon herself. She was able to encounter the difficulties of the way, and my responsibility was at an end. I had not *asked* her to come; it was her own proposition. As I looked at her, a bright gleam of sunshine, glinting through the leaves, played upon her head, and lingered there as though it loved it. How pretty she was, and what deep rich colouring there was about her; she might have been a model for a Madonna di Raffaello. She possessed, too, one of those charming little faces that the French call *mobile*, one that can be all smiles and dimples and blushes and tears in an instant. How often I could paint her when I had her all to myself

in my tent. It was a great temptation, and she begged so earnestly to be allowed to accompany me, that I said, 'Well, Lattoo, I will, at any rate, consult the sahib about it.'

But I did not expect the sahib back till the shades of evening would be closing over us, for he had taken a 'nose-bag' with him, filled with creature comforts, and I was not to look for him, he told me, till dinner-time; and, once started, he would wander far, I knew. So telling her that she might return to-morrow, and remain with me as long as we were here, I ordered my pony to be saddled, and the blue line beginning to creep up the mountain, I rode back with her, along the banks of the Teesta and Rungheet, till we reached a narrow gorge, through which a shallow stream trickled and emptied itself into the great river; when, taking off her gay-coloured mocassins, she stepped at once into the middle of the stream, the banks being too rocky to admit of her doing otherwise, and went her way.

Reining in my pony, I stood watching the *svelte* and graceful little figure tripping over the stones, and listening to the plash of her footfall, as she waded through the water, till she disappeared behind a bold rock at the head of the gorge, whither the river winding got lost to view. Long before reaching the bridge on my homeward way, I heard F——'s voice echoing along the Teesta valley, shouting to announce his speedy return.

The next morning Lattoo presented herself, her face all radiant with smiles, and figure brilliant in a dress of

red, blue, and orange. F——, to whom I had confided my invitation to her, ordered our men forthwith to make a little leaf-hut for her, near to our own, which, by the way, proved a complete success. Nothing came to disturb our slumbers, and, as the bulletins say, we 'passed a calm and tranquil night.'

The time sped only too swiftly, each day bringing its pleasant incident. Sometimes we made long excursions up or down the valley in quest of ferns for pressing, and orchids for hanging in the verandah of our mountain home. The best plan to obtain the latter is to peel away the bark of the tree to which they are attached, when they will bloom each year as in their natural habitat, requiring no water or any attention whatever, but solely to be allowed to breathe the air of heaven, and only coveting to be loved and admired as all fair things do Sometimes F—— accompanied me on these expeditions, sometimes Lattoo and I went alone, occasionally crossing the Rungheet bridge—a much smaller one than that of the Teesta, but also a marvel of cane-work and engineering skill. Beyond this the mountain slope for some distance is clothed with tall pines, resembling the Scotch fir, and it is singular to observe anything so like the vegetation of our own isles growing in combination with that of the tropics: but it is here only, I believe, in all these valleys that they are seen.

'Mem sahib!' exclaimed one of my attendant Lepchas one day, as I sat making a sketch, with Lattoo by

my side—'how many rupees will you get for that *taswir* ?'

'Nothing,' I replied. 'I paint because it pleases me.'

'What!' he rejoined, with a look in which both astonishment and pity were mingled—'nothing! I thought it was your *bickree*' (trade).

They are such a thoroughly indolent people themselves, that they find it difficult to realise any one's working for mere pleasure or amusement. And this remark reminded me of that of a Rajah, who, being present at a ball, at a period when English customs were not so well known in India as they are now, exclaimed, on seeing English ladies dance for the first time, 'Can it be possible that these are *ladies* dancing? I thought they were *nautch-girls*. We always hire people to dance for us.'

In some places the Lepchas are burning portions of the forest to clear the land for cultivation; and at night it was a wondrous and awful sight to see the flame stalking along like a hungry and insatiable demon, destroying all it touched, and with its eager tongue lapping up the goodly trees—the bamboos, being hollow, yielding to the force of the fierce element with loud explosions like that of cannon, from the expansion of confined air; and the burning of one of these spreading clumps, often more than twenty feet in height, reminded me of the final burst of rockets at a pyrotechnic display, whilst the noise was perfectly deafening.

At night too, we often watch our people set bamboo

traps for fish, which generally forms our breakfast the following morning. Various kinds are found in these rivers, one of which, the maha-seer, is exceedingly nice; and there is also another, the flavour of which is not unlike trout. The Lepchas invariably cook their fish in the hollow of a bamboo, which they plunge into hot wood ashes, where it is allowed to seethe till tender.

The pathway along the margin of the river Teesta being the high road to Bhootan, between which and Bengal a considerable trade is carried on, we frequently make friends with the parties of wayfarers bivouacking here, and induce them to show us their wares, sometimes making extensive purchases, F——, amongst other things, collecting yâk tails, one of their articles of commerce. Of these tails a kind of brush is made, often mounted in silver, and much used in riding, for the purpose of switching off flies. They are very long, covered with rich glossy wool almost like silk, and are of three colours, black, white, and grey. At no hour of the day can one walk very far in this valley without lighting on a number of travellers, their picturesque packs lying beside them; one party alone consisting frequently of as many as ten or fifteen men. Choosing a shady place a little distance from the main pathway, and collecting together a heap of large stones, they construct a rude fire-place, in the centre of which they pile wood, and then proceed to cook their food in a large earthen pot, generally consisting of rice mixed with '*ghee*.' They also make a

tough cake with the flour of Indian corn, and bake it in the cinders; and after the meal, each man may be seen with his iron pipe silently smoking. Their looks belie them, for they are a wonderfully peaceful and quiet people, in spite of their formidable appearance, some of them attaining a height of more than six feet, all broad-chested and muscular, with Tartar features, the eye small with long pointed corners, whilst long knives hang from their belts. They always seem pleased, too, when we stop and address them, not one in return for our intru-

sion in their midst giving us even a surly glance. But our conversation with them is not carried on in a particularly lively manner, the Bhootia language being a dialect of Thibetan, more or less blended with words and

idioms of the countries on which it borders. Bhootan itself is an extensive region of Northern Hindustan, lying between Bengal and Thibet, separated from the latter country by the Himalaya, and forming the southern portion of the declivity of that stupendous Alpine chain, of which Thibet forms the table-land, touching Assam on the east, and called by the Hindoos, *Bhote.*

The principal manufacture of the country is paper, made from the bark of a tree, the *Daphne papyrifera*, from which a kind of satin is also made, much worn by the Chinese. Coarse woollen and linen cloths are also manufactured there, the chief articles of export being ivory, musk, rock salt, tobacco, gold dust, and silver ingots. The trade, however, is a monopoly in the hands of the government, the Deb Rajah sending companies of men laden with these articles every year to the Bengal Presidency.

In addition to their heavy loads, each man carries on a little light, and I suspect contraband, trading on his own account, his pouch formed by the loose robe above the girdle being full of small objects of merchandise—idols, pieces of ivory, barbs for arrows, musk, assafœtida, spices, tobacco, opium, dried fruit; a pair of forceps, a wooden comb, and other toilet arrangements, occasionally even gunpowder. As they pull one thing after another out of their pockets, they often laugh heartily over the heterogeneous collection spread before us. Sometimes

they carry Thibetan puppies for sale; little fat round balls covered with long fluffy wool; flat-faced like the people, and with eyes keen and deep-set. But F—— is more interested in their weapons than in aught else. These vary in shape, and are frequently enclosed in very beautiful scabbards; their knives, in most instances, being short and curved. To each of these is attached a steel for striking light, a needle-case, a smaller knife, and pair of forceps, every one of these articles having its own little leather case. They also carry arrows, the barbs of which are dipped in a poison taken from a tree unknown to Europeans, and about which they are very reticent, never divulging its name under any circumstances. These arrows, together with their knives and falchions, form their only weapons in war. Having spent nearly a week in this 'happy valley,' we start on the morrow for a short trip into their country.

CHAPTER XIV.

WE CROSS OVER INTO BHOOTAN, AND TAKE A LITTLE HEALTHFUL EXERCISE.

VERY fair broke the morn. Lo! eastward the sun, just rising above the mountain tops, began, like a magician's wand, to irradiate all nature with hues of gold and azure. Rapidly the line of shadow crept down the mountain slopes, till sky, and forest, and tremulous water were bathed in its effulgence, and all the valley wore a smile.

After a hasty breakfast, singly and severally we crossed the bridge, and found mules awaiting us, which were ordered some days ago from a place in Bhootan. Most astounding and overwhelming animals they were, their accoutrements so massive that they might, and possibly *did*, originally belong to Budh himself, the saddle alone taking one back to primeval time, the mules themselves nearly bald, and their tails bereft of hair except at the extreme tip, where a little shaggy tuft—a relic of past glory—still lingered.

It was some time before we could attempt to mount them, so convulsed with laughter were we over the sight of the tatterdemalion and quaintly caparisoned quadrupeds

which were waiting to convey us; and when at last we were in our saddles, we nearly fell off again from the same cause. At length, having recovered our composure, we commenced the ascent of the gorge; and I only wish our friends at home could have witnessed our grotesque cavalcade. Before us walked our muleteers, behind followed a native, also on mule-back, carrying a rusty match-lock, the first thing in all probability ever made in the shape of fire-arms. In the matter of dress, however, he was quite resplendent, and looked a compromise between a Fire-worshipper of old and an Effendi of the 'Arabian Nights,' for he wore an imposing turban of blue and gold, wound round a conical cap of faded red, with large heavy flaps covering the ears, and a blue cloth coat, whilst a scarlet 'cummerbund' encircled the waist.

A zig-zag path had been worn away in the hard dry soil by travellers climbing with heavy loads, and this path we, as well as the Lepchas, who were laden with stores, followed; but the rest of our party, scrambling up the almost perpendicular face of the mountain, were already far above us. It was a frightful climb truly for man and beast, but what superb and glorious views we obtained of mountain and river as we gradually ascended!

All rivers are said to 'wind' like a silver thread. I wish I could say that mine *did not*. I wish I could say that the Teesta shot like a silver arrow, or wound like a green ribbon, or foamed like a mighty torrent—anything

but the conventional simile, but I cannot: there it is beneath me, flowing along like the veritable silver thread, with this exception, that it did not merely *wind*, I am thankful to say it did more, it meandered; whilst the bridge and our little homestead, distanced into microscopic dimensions, looked like Swiss toys. As we ascended higher, parasites festooning each branch in rich garlands enclosed wondrous pictures of blue mountain and crystal peak in a natural framework of leaves; and after a hard climb of several thousand feet, occupying seven hours, we breathed a purer and more bracing atmosphere, and reached Kalimpoong.

Here we find a very capacious and clean hut, of a more substantial description, erected some months ago for that most excellent of men, Major M——, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, who was then travelling in this district. Our servants and party of Lepchas have this time not only arrived, but have made two large camp-fires in readiness for us—a cheering sight, for the air is keen and nipping after the heat of the valley. There is an abundance of dry wood lying about in the neighbouring forest, and dragging along huge logs, they heap one upon another till they reach several feet in height, and look like funereal pyres.

Not only Lattoo and our servants, but even the poor heavily laden Lepchas also, gathered every new flower and fern they met with on their way hither, and spread them out before us on our arrival, till we found ourselves

surrounded by a carpet of flowers. They have also adorned themselves with them, having one stuck in each ear, the flower they most favour being that of the Lotus-tree. But F—— does not find the 'butterfly Lepcha' as energetic as he might be in the practice of his art. He has found no new specimens for two days, but seems rather to spend his time in talking to Lattoo; and one would suppose that this individual imagined that Lepidoptera were only to be found in her immediate neighbourhood, so closely does he follow her about.

In the course of an hour we are engaged in the consumption of a very prosaic and substantial dinner; and

I think it would astonish the great Soyer himself, to see the repast these native cooks can serve when camping out. What 'savoury messes,' delicious curries, soups, and appetising stews! A few round holes made in the ground, filled with charcoal, and there is scarcely anything they cannot produce.

Half a mile further on is a small guard-post, some four or five native police being stationed there. With this exception, the vast wild with which we are sur-

rounded is wholly unpeopled. Not a sound is heard as we sit by our camp-fire in the solemn stillness, feeling absolutely alone in the great heart of Nature, for our poor tired folk are recumbent and fast asleep, round their own fire, fifty yards off. Beneath our feet lies the valley of the Teesta, from which a ghostly streak of vapour is rising, gathering up into soft cumuli as it slowly ascends, and obscuring the outlines of the nearer mountains.

From this elevation we again catch sight of the Snowy Range, though only of the loftiest peaks in Thibet, Kinchinjunga, as well as the whole of the Sikkim Himalaya, being hidden by the forest-clad mountains to our left; but these we hope to see again to-morrow from a totally different aspect, and from a much higher point than Darjeeling.

It is a sweet starry evening, and the vast mountains, which, as the song says, are 'so near and yet so far,' are veiled in a soft transparent mist. Not a breath stirs the forest, for the breeze died away hours ago with the setting sun; nothing seems to live but the twinkling stars, and a solitary fire-fly, which has wandered up from the warm valley, probably to see the sun set upon the mountains, and is unable to find its way back again with its tiny lamp.

There is something sublimely awful in the solitude and isolation of this great sanctuary of Nature; we seem to be in some other, purer world. As I shut my eyes, the air seems peopled with the shadowy forms of dear ones long since gone to rest,—the little band who have

crossed the dark valley and the troubled sea, and reached the peaceful shore beyond. Gentle eyes look once more into mine, loving hands press my own, the past is again before me, with all its sad and pleasant memories, when we are startled by an apparition, as suddenly appearing as Mephistopheles at the bidding of Faust. A Gnome or Earth-spirit he might be, so silently has he stolen upon us. But a sudden gleam of fire-light shows him to be none other than a very weird and uncanny-looking creature in the flesh. He is almost entirely clad in fur, and presents two fine bear skins for sale, as well as a young bear which he is leading. But we decline to enter into negociations for either, at which he seems much disappointed, and as far as we can gather from mute language, carried on through the medium of gesticulation, he is sounding the praises of the little Bruin: he takes him in his arms, folds him to his bosom, and does all he can to demonstrate his docile and affectionate disposition; but we have already possessed tame bears, and juvenile leopards too, and have no wish to make a further acquaintance with them; and the 'voice of the charmer' failing to make any impression upon us, he disappears as suddenly and mysteriously as he came.

Then we stroll along in the direction of the forest, and pass our servants' camp. The Lepchas and Mahomedans—the latter being men of caste—have each a separate shelter to themselves, made of large boughs hastily thrown together and supported by stakes. Rolled

up tightly in their 'sarees,' or rugs, in such a manner as to display every outline of the face and figure, and lying at full length side by side, they look exactly like mummies.

In the dark portions of the forest where the moon's rays do not penetrate, our attention is arrested by a pale phosphorescent light, and perhaps this is one of the most singular phenomena of the Himalayas; a walk at night near the woods, which are sometimes a-glow with it, being sufficient to excite a sense of the supernatural, even in minds the most practical and prosaic, for the dead trees, which are scattered everywhere, are covered with this blue flame, which, increasing and decreasing with every motion of the wind, looks very ghostly in the 'stilly night,' requiring but slight exercise of the imagination on the part of the observer to fancy that it assumes shape and form. I remember not long ago walking into a dark room at Darjeeling, and being startled at seeing a mass of blue light flickering in a corner. At that time I had not heard of this phenomenon, but on going to fetch a candle and returning with one, I found that it proceeded from a quantity of decayed wood placed there for the morrow's fire. It is, I believe, either during or after the rainy season that it is most seen.

The following morning, after a very comfortable and undisturbed night's rest, and after having given silent thanks to Him, who watched over us during the helpless hours of slumber, we stand outside the hut waiting for our mules, which are to carry us on to Dumsong, a native

settlement in Bhootan. The shed of the mules is not far distant, and we can see it from the verandah of our hut; but they manifest such a strong determination not to leave it, that at one moment our departure seemed more than doubtful, and it is only by means of physical force brought to bear upon them by the muleteers that they

are induced to advance at last; the above being a faithful sketch made of that interesting tableau whilst standing intently watching their proceedings. But once at our side, F—— after much difficulty succeeded in getting me into my saddle, but scarcely mounted himself with that facility which, as an old equestrian, he had every right to expect.

Once mounted, however, we do manage somehow to make a start; but they only back us the very next moment to the extreme edge of the 'khud'—*vide* end of chapter (sketch from memory, made whilst sitting on a

portmanteau at the close of journey)—and it is nothing short of a miracle that we are not precipitated over it into the abyss, three thousand feet below. In coming here yesterday, they were on their homeward road, besides which they were *ascending* the whole time, so that we had no opportunity of testing their delightful attributes on level ground.

But off at last, we pass through scenery the character of which changes completely. Instead of dense forests, we traverse undulating wolds, a wild waste of country, surrounded by precipitous mountains, here picturesquely wooded, there torn up by deep gullies and ravines. The principal rocks in these mountains are granite and an imperfect quartz, the latter having the appearance of marble, which is much used in the manufacture of a kind of porcelain. It is conjectured that these mountain ranges contain considerable mineral wealth; but iron and copper are the only metals hitherto discovered, of which iron is the only one as yet applied to much purpose by the natives. And now entering a stratum of mist, we try to make the muleteers lead our steeds, for the path being narrow and rough, it is no easy matter to guide them ourselves in the blinding fog; but they are so utterly obtuse, that by no means in our power can we make them understand what we mean. At last F——, having lost all patience, dismounts to give them ocular demonstration; but they only gaze at him with mouths and eyes wide open, and seem more bewildered than before. I really believe that

Mr. Darwin might here find the 'missing link,' and nurse his pet theory to his heart's content. But the mist soon clears, fortunately—it was only a cloud passing over us—and the sun, again shining, creates a world of beauty and grandeur out of the dim chaos of a few minutes before. But what torturing, agonising creatures are our mules—large bony animals of a roughness of action positively inconceivable to the uninitiated.

Passing over tolerably level ground, we now try to quicken our pace, but our incorrigible animals kick

violently at the slightest touch of the whip. To these little manifestations of temper we should have no objection whatever, if they would only go on when they were over; but no amount of persuasion will induce them to canter for an instant; whilst, if we merely *walk*

them, it will be impossible to reach Dumsong before midnight. We are therefore obliged to accept their conventional and conservative jog-trot pace, as the inevitable. Moreover, the bridle and bit we long ago discovered to be purely ornamental accessories, possibly intended to give them a war-like appearance, for they heed neither; and we find that the only way of making them move at all—for they soon tire of trotting, and break into a walk—is to tug violently at the reins as if to pull them in, when they make spasmodic efforts to go on. Not unfrequently the breath gets so thoroughly knocked out of us, that we are obliged to stop to recover a little strength, to enable us to endure manfully to the end; but when jogging on, what torture it is to stop them, and when reined in, what dislocation to get them on again! I defy the temper of an angel to stand the test of a ride on a Himalayan mule. We try to comfort ourselves, however, by the consideration that we are 'doing' Bhootan—but, in spite of this consoling reflection, we should no doubt long ago have given them up as hopeless, and returned in peace and quiet to the valley, had not our men gone on, not only with our baggage, but, alas! with all our provisions also, and we needs must follow.

As we went on thus for two agonising hours, the ground began to wear a look of cultivation, and we soon came upon the evidence of man's presence, as shown in smiling patches of millet, buckwheat, and Indian-corn, enclosing neat homesteads, thatched with bamboo, with

overhanging roofs, from which hung bunches of Indian-corn drying in the sun. In the balconies the women of the family could be seen busily occupied in weaving or spinning. But our approach causes much consternation, if not alarm: one and all run into their huts, whence they peer at us through the apertures in the mud walls, or eye us askance through the doorways; whilst one old woman, whom we met on the road, raced back a long way, till she was quite out of breath and unable to run any further, when, climbing a steep bank, she looked down upon us with a perfectly scared expression, as though she had seen a ghost.

Passing more fields of millet and buckwheat, waving gently in the breeze, we again leave all trace of human habitation behind, and enter an undulating forest, so dense that the light of day is almost excluded. Birds, roused from their solitary haunts, scurry away, rising with a whr-r-r, and flutter and screech, evidently resenting this unusual intrusion in their midst. Ascending and descending very steep gradients, F——, after various misadventures, deserts his noble steed entirely *and walks*; for not only was the saddle destitute of crupper, but something had gone hopelessly wrong with the whole machinery, so that, when going up hill, he was threatened to be shot over the animal's back, and when going down, in a scarcely less ignominious manner, he was in danger of being precipitated over its neck; till, coming to an unusually steep descent, he did at last roll over on the

ground, whilst the mule, not the least disconcerted, stood helplessly in the pathway, without attempting to move, the saddle covering its head like a quakeress's bonnet; and never can I forget its benign expression as it peeped forth from beneath it. F——, happily, beyond a severe shaking, was not any the worse for his fall; for a time he lost his hat and saddle-bags, but after some search they were rescued, very wet 'flotsam and jetsam,' in a stagnant pool below.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FLESH-POTS OF BHOOTAN.

THERE is nothing, however dreadful it may be, that does not sooner or later come to an end, and so at length did our weary agonising ride. After six hours, the foliage became thinner, little bits of blue sky were visible through the canopy of leaves, lights danced everywhere, and we reached Dumsong. This is a singularly wild place, and more desolate than I can describe. Although surrounded by a superb and majestic amphitheatre of perpetually snow-capped peaks, their base furrowed by deep chasms and a thousand water-courses, that permeate the whole like arteries in the human frame, there is nothing to relieve the severe outlines of the mountain masses as at Darjeeling, and Nature is seen in her most savage mood.

From the summit of the hill no sign of habitation is visible; but a little lower down, nestling in the bosom of the mountain, a group of Bhootia dwellings is seen. Before leaving Darjeeling we were told that we should here find, a decent 'house' to rest in for the night, the late residence of a Government official, a European, who, with his wife, was stationed for a long time

at Dumsong; but for what purpose I am at a loss to conceive, for a more heaven-forsaken place can hardly be imagined. We can just see it half a mile distant, standing alone on the spur of a mountain, surrounded by its little 'clearance,' all the rest being covered with thick jungle.

Leaving our wretched mules behind, we walk across to the house, but find that the bats have taken possession of it before us: the thatch has fallen in; the windows, if there ever were any, have fallen out; and the entire structure is in such a state of ruin that it is difficult to determine what luxuries it once possessed. It is erected on poles, and climbing the broken ladder, we look in, and discover that the once whitewashed walls are covered with cobwebs, and that colonies of insects have built cells in all its corners.

Curious to enter the only European habitation in these wilds, we cautiously venture through the open doorway, for the flooring has also given way. Instantly a number of bats and large birds come swooping down from the rafters. It is a horrible and ghostly place to be in, and we beat a hasty retreat, not knowing what else we may find there. Walking round the basement, we see traces of the remote existence of a garden, now overgrown with weeds and rank grass; and there is something very beautiful and touching in these slight indications of the way in which my countrymen pluckily make the best of the worst, and cheerfully submit to the inevitable, by making a *home* in a wilderness of exile, even such as this.

On the summit of a neighbouring hill stand the ruins of an old fort, riddled with shot and shell; but we have scarcely time to look at anything, for day is waning, and we must find some other shelter. Hastening back, therefore, to the village, where there is a small guard of native police, we hope they will be able to render us some assistance; and seeing one approach, whom we recognise by his uniform—a white tunic, with crimson turban, and sash round the waist—we endeavour to explain our dilemma. None of our party of servants have yet come up—we passed them on the road more than an hour ago—and this makes our position the more embarrassing; but the chowkeydar fortunately speaks Hindustani, and at once precedes us to the village to make known our necessities.

All the villagers turn out to see us, obviously regarding us as an immense novelty. Women, children, pariahs, and pigs, whose backs in this country bristle like porcupines, appear to take a lively interest in the affair, all materially assisting in the very noisy discussion which is being carried on, in a shrill key, between the 'chowkeydar' and the 'head-man.' To a stranger they would seem to be quarrelling; but we have learnt by experience that no transaction, of ever so slight a kind, can be settled by natives without a great deal of unnecessary hubbub and confusion.

Presently this subsides; the pariahs, having taken the most prominent part in the proceedings, retire with a final yelp to their rubbish heaps, and the pigs to their respective

huts, to quiet the minds of those of their kind which have been detained indoors, and assure them that the matter in hand has been satisfactorily disposed of.

We are now led through the tortuous windings of the little village to a newly erected hut in process of being thatched, which the head-man places at our service, and

which, in the absence of anything better, I need scarcely say we unhesitatingly accept. We have plenty of rugs, happily, to keep us from the cold, and really require nothing more than a thatch to protect us from the heavy dew. Meanwhile, F——, significantly chinking the money in his pocket, bids them by gesture make all speed; and the silver key that speaks every language is eloquent in this instance also, for by the time the sun has set upon

the loftiest peak the shed is completed, and most of our servants have arrived.

Thinking the walk would be too much for the women-folk, we had suggested their staying behind at Kalimpoong; but they preferred coming on with us, and by leaving the pathway which we had to follow on our mules, and striking through the forest, they came a nearer way, and, saving a distance of several miles, arrived as soon as the rest of our people.

By a provoking combination of circumstances, the only two who are lingering behind turn out to be the coolie carrying the provision basket and the cook, the latter, we are told, having been taken ill upon the way. A fire is soon kindled, however, and some game roasting over it, which F—— shot on the way hither, so that at any rate we shall not starve. The villagers, moreover, soon come in procession, bringing eggs, milk, and oranges for sale, together with a nondescript animal, something between a kid and a lamb, but scarcely larger than a good-sized cat. It is such a miserable, half-starved looking creature altogether, that we feel it will be a real charity to have it killed, even if we do not eat it; and the kitmutgar, who is evidently a person of sanguine temperament, gives it as *his* opinion that it will make 'very good mutton.'

Whilst the slaughter of the innocent is going on, we stroll out in the moonlight to see some ruined 'mendongs,' little buildings in the shape of temples, their sides covered with upright stone slabs, on which inscriptions are carved

in Thibetan, now half obliterated by time. There are also larger ones, bearing representations of Budh, sitting cross-legged, with rays round the head, intended, as I imagine, to represent a sort of primitive aureola, and with an expression of jovial astonishment in his large round eyes. Below these mendongs, stretches a valley, in which may be traced the course of the Teesta up to its snowy cradle; and the air is so clear and nipping, that the most distant objects are seen with wonderful distinctness, the snowy peaks looking like pale cameos set in sapphire.

The flesh-pots are not encouraging; but too hungry to be very fastidious, we return to our shed, and find not only that dinner is ready, but that, to our horror, besides making 'mutton' of the innocent, which we expected would appear in the shape of cutlets, or some other luxury, at the morrow's breakfast, in the absence of our *chef de cuisine*, they have actually roasted it whole for our present repast, after the manner of 'moorghee grill,' and there it is before us, looking like a spread eagle.

As we sit inside the shed, and try to be contented with such fare as the gods give us, a homeless pariah creeps in stealthily, and seats himself by my side, a humble petitioner for bounty; one of those waifs that always make me unhappy even to remember them. The foxes have holes, and the jackals their home in the jungle; but the pariah, though half domestic, and haunting the abode of man, is kicked and cuffed by all classes of society, an outcast, for which no place in life is granted. They

consequently wear that friendless, 'down in the mouth,' but sorrowfully resigned look, almost human in its sadness, which, with my affection for all animals, makes my very heart ache to see; and when I say 'poor fellow,' as I always do, or give them some other word of greeting, they turn upon me first an abject gaze, in which profound amazement is mingled, and then, as if awakening at last to some faint inkling of my kindly meaning, very slightly wag the tail, in all probability for the first and last time in their whole lives. To me a pariah is the saddest thing in nature, and my friendship for them has won for me the proud title of the 'pariah's friend.'

Then crouching round our camp-fire we listen to the singing of Tartar melodies—for the Bhootias, like every other nation, also possess a primitive music—and to a man in a neighbouring hut twanging out a Thibetan air on a kind of guitar, whilst others sing; the whole rendered all the more sweet by an occasional obligato accompaniment of jackals in the distance.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MIDNIGHT CONCERT.

'TIRED nature's sweet restorer' was far from us that night. How could it be otherwise? Sheep bleated, cows grunted—Bhootia cows always do—whilst the herd of jackals which discoursed plaintive music from a more distant 'platform' earlier in the evening, waxing bold, as balmy sleep fell on the human inhabitants of the little village, came near, and favoured us with a serenade.

The natives took no notice of them, however, appearing, on the contrary, to be sleeping soundly within their huts, possibly soothed to rest by these warblers of the night. And why not? for, after all, beauty of sound as well as form often consists as much in association as in the object itself; Mr. Ruskin, who ought to be an authority in such matters, declaring Beauty to be a phantom of the brain, called up by association merely. But whether it arise from idealism, gregariousness, or a real attribute of external nature, it matters little in the present case, for to *our* ears, not familiarised to these nightingales by habit or fond association, the sound resembled a dismal and unearthly wailing of women, with a strong dash of the hyæna, to which a whole kennel of hounds baying the

moon would in comparison have been as loveliest music of the spheres.

With all possible admiration for the brave captain of the *Rob-Roy*, I cannot agree with him, when, alluding to the 'wild jackal's scream' of Egypt, he describes it as 'plaintive, clear, and not unmusical, but rather lulls to slumber.' My recollection of the Egyptian jackal—for I too have sojourned in that land—is, that its strains are no sweeter, but precisely those of its Indian brethren; and I ask my compatriots in exile, whether those nocturnal visitants to their 'compounds' are wont to produce a sweet and soothing lullaby or otherwise, and whether Mr. McGregor's sense of 'beauty,' for once, is not ideal to an unusual extent?

We were, besides all these, beset by a pariah, one of my 'pets,' as F——, disturbed from his slumbers, reproachfully called it, which stood at the entrance to the shed, barking and howling by turns, threatening to make a dash at us perpetually through the open doorway; but he (F——) was provokingly philosophical about the whole, and with an occasional 'Get out!' administered in stentorian accents, maintained silence throughout the night, save when snoring euphoniously beneath his rugs, whilst I sat up in a perfect whirl of excitement and apprehension.

We had previously intended making another day's journey into the interior, but now decide to remain here, to give our people a day's rest, and then to return to-morrow, feeling we have seen quite as much of Bhootan

as we care for. A beautiful picture of the snowy range may be made from this spot, with the 'mendongs'—which some affirm to be Lama tombs—for a foreground, so that the day need not be spent altogether unprofitably. The aspect of the mountains, too, is so completely changed from this position that none of the peaks with which we are familiar at Darjeeling are recognisable. Beneath the highest, at an elevation of about 22,000 feet, are two singular columns of rock, their base embedded in the snow; and one can hardly help fancying, from the regularity of their formation, that, instead of being the result of nature's mighty agency, they must have been hewn, and placed there by some human, but Giant hand.

It is interesting to observe the effect which these grand and sublime scenes have upon Lattoo's untutored mind. All Lepchas are true worshippers of nature under whatever form, and, although a Bhootia, she has much more of the Lepcha in her disposition than that of her own race. When walking along, she will often stop suddenly, as some new loveliness of mountain, river, or wayside flower strikes her, and gaze in silent wonder; mountains particularly seeming to have a solemnising effect upon her, as they have upon some minds. There was a reserved grace and dignity about her occasionally, at which I marvelled greatly in one of her class, and, in spite of her little caprices and laughing eye, her face would assume a sad and pensive expression, as though there were thoughts and feelings within her, to which she longed but

could never find words to give utterance, till the yearning became almost painful. Her mind was like a rich but uncultivated soil, whose depths I longed to open, and she became, if possible, an object of greater interest to me each day.

'I wish I was already *thar*, mem sahib,' she said to me as I sat beneath the mendongs sketching the beautiful snows with the evening light upon them. 'We shall be soon, eh, mem sahib?'

'You must not be too sure of going with us, Lattoo,' I replied; 'the sahib has not yet decided that you *are* to go.' For I saw she had set her heart upon it, and I did not wish to disappoint her. She had already proved herself rather wilful since she had been with me, even these few days, and I began to realise in my heart of hearts that to have her with me for a permanency would be much the same as having a young hippopotamus, or some other half-tamed creature, highly amusing and delightful for a time, and at stated intervals, but nevertheless an anxiety and worry to have about one every day, and all day long. Only this morning a little episode occurred that gave me some insight into her character.

Leaving the shed I caught sight of a strange little figure approaching, which at first I had some difficulty in recognising.

'Is that *you* Lattoo!' I exclaimed, as she made me a little curt salaam.

In the place of the pretty headgear she knew I liked

so well, and her hair neatly braided beneath it, she had the latter tucked back, and completely hidden by a yellow cotton handkerchief bound round the head, in the most unbecoming way possible; and one glance at her defiant look and compressed lips, so unlike the placid pensive smile with which she usually greeted me, showed plainly enough that her appearance was not the result of accident, but design. All at once I recollected that I had had occasion to reprove her slightly last night, and, like a naughty wayward child, she was no doubt resenting it, by rendering her appearance as unpleasing as possible. She had evidently not forgotten, either, the pains I took to arrange the folds of her skirt, when she stood for her portrait, for she had now pinned it behind her in great awkward plaits. It was difficult to help laughing at this bewitching little Fury; but I took no notice of her, feeling assured that that was the quickest way of restoring her to her former gentle, happy self. With the remembrance of this little ebullition of temper still present with me, I repeated,

'I do not think the sahib will let me take you, Lattoo; you know you could not walk all the way, and we should have to take bearers to carry you. The sahib has been very good to let you be with me so long now, and you must be grateful for this, and not repine because you cannot have all that you would like.'

The following morning we mount our mules again, and hope by starting early to reach Kalimpoong in time

to give ourselves and them a short rest, and then go on to the Teesta. Now that F—— has improvised a crupper for his saddle, and the mules have their heads turned in a homeward direction, they jog on more amiably. As we descend through the forest, two wolves cross our path fifty yards ahead. F—— tries to shoot them but misses. He bags some game, however, to replenish the commissariat, consisting of a hill partridge and ungus pheasant; the latter a beautiful bird with scarlet feathers, dotted all over with small white spots, like eyes. Later in the day he also shot a waterfowl the size of a large duck, the plumage of which was dark-blue and yellow, and its legs and the broad webbed feet the brightest orange.

One cannot help being greatly struck with the appearance of Bhootan as one passes through it; that is to say, of those portions which are under cultivation. The soil is rich, the crops abundant, and the people themselves look very thriving, their large and commodious huts being surrounded by fields of millet and bhoota. But there can be small encouragement for the amassing of wealth in a country where, on the death of the head of a family—no matter how numerous the children he leaves behind him, or what the nature of their requirements—the whole of his property reverts to the Deb Rajah, and where the people generally are over-ridden by the Soobahs, and taxed beyond bearing.

On our arrival at Kalimpoong, we find our cook, who appears to be in a highly flourishing condition of body and

SCHOOLGIRLS & PUPILS BY MOONLIGHT

mind. We have a very shrewd suspicion that he induced our baggage coolies, probably by the promise of 'backsheesh,' to say he had been taken ill upon the road, and that in reality he had not left this place at all, but spent the time pleasantly in the society of the Guards, with whom he seems to be on exceedingly friendly terms.

We are here told that it would be unwise to attempt to leave this place before to-morrow, and that if we persisted in doing so we should in all probability be benighted on the downward way, not a very pleasant prospect with the gorge full of leopards. We are perfectly willing, however, to put up once more in this clean and comfortable hut, which, after our Dumsong campaign, seems positively luxurious.

Accordingly, at noon the next day we reach the beautiful Teesta, where everything looks more lovely than ever, after the bleak and desolate regions we have quitted. The flowing river, the picturesque figures crossing the fairy-like bridge, and the wondrous luxuriance and gorgeous colouring of the vegetation, all delight us anew. Bidding a joyful farewell to our wretched mules, which we hope never again to behold in the flesh, and giving a parting 'backsheesh' to the muleteers—the only thing which they seem capable of understanding, for they loudly clamour for more—we come to anchor once more in our little shanty, though for a few hours only this time, having sent our Lepchas on with baggage, &c. to the next halting-place, further up the river on the opposite side.

We linger till evening approaches, and then cross the Teesta on the bamboo raft I have before described. A frail bark it truly is to trust oneself upon, the rapids making its tiny timbers creak and strain, as though it must break up and fall to pieces. The swift bounding current bears us to the right, and reaching the opposite

shore, we walk a little higher up the river, and find that the Lepchas have already made 'leaf huts' for Lattoo and ourselves in a little romantic spot, close to the margin of the river; and very rural abodes they are, whilst the breeze, blowing through the freshly gathered boughs, renders them cool and fragrant.

As we are in a very lonely place, surrounded by jungle, provision is at once made for large fires, to prevent any invasion of wild beasts during the night. After this the Lepchas again set traps to catch fish, and then making cups of their hands, they bale up water and sprinkle it about them, as if invoking the protection of the river god; for, like the Hindoos, they have a mythology.

Lattoo has been less mirthful to-day. Last night, after retiring to our hut, I heard voices speaking outside

in subdued tones for a long time, and on looking out, I found her talking in an earnest manner to the 'butterfly Lepcha.' They were both opposite the camp-fire, which, burning brightly, enabled me to distinguish their features perfectly.

'Lattoo!' I exclaimed, appearing out of the darkness, and standing before them like an inconvenient and inopportune ghost, 'What are you doing here? You will catch cold.'

'All right, mem sahib,' she replied, turning round sharply, and speaking in her pretty broken English, with the least possible tremor in her voice. 'Lepcha man only fetch bring Lattoo *watter*.'

I had had no opportunity of alluding to the matter during the day, for she had, as I fancied, studiously avoided me; but as soon as I reached the Rungheet, and had her quietly in the hut all to myself, I remarked that the young Lepcha had all along seemed much more fond of walking by her side than of catching butterflies, and that the sahib had noticed it. Hereupon she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and throwing herself on the ground, clasped my feet, saying:—

'Oh, mem sahib! don't be hard upon him; it is poor Atchoo. I did not want him to come, but he would.'

'But do you think it was kind of you, Lattoo, to keep me in the dark? You know I have always been your friend, and shown you what sympathy I could.'

'Eh, mem sahib, yes! but I was afraid.'

'Afraid of what?'

'Of the sahib; afraid that he might punish Atchoo if you told him of it.'

At this juncture our conversation was cut short by the entrance of the sahib himself, who bade me come out

and enjoy the moonlight, and I could say no more on the subject then.

F—— and I paced the bank of the river to and fro, near our little encampment, till the moon had not only

risen behind the tree-fringed mountain crest, but crossed the gorge. It was our last bivouac in this peaceful valley, and we would make the most of it. Retiring soon after midnight, we slept soundly till two o'clock, when I was awakened by a distant noise as of branches bending and snapping in the forest behind us, then the muffled thud of footsteps, whether human or otherwise I could not determine, but hoped it might be merely those of some of our men. At length there was a sudden burst of sound, as if the very boughs of our hut were being torn out. Shrieking for F——, I found the noise had not only aroused him, but that he was searching for his rifle. Cautiously opening the door—a kind of impromptu hurdle—he discerned what in the darkness appeared to be nothing more *formi*dable than a number of cows surrounding us. Meanwhile shouting lustily for our people, who had carelessly allowed the fires to die out, he struck a light, and venturing outside, found a herd of buffalo quietly grazing on the leaves of our abode—eating it up, in fact!

Dangerous creatures as they sometimes are, they were easily frightened away on this occasion. They made up for their docility, however, by bellowing furiously, the sound they produce being something between the snort of a walrus and the grunt of a Bhootia cow, and the forest rang with these wild orgies for at least an hour afterwards.

Making our men relight the fires, we once more sub-

sided into comfortable sleep, and at peep of day, strolling down by the river, we saw the buffalo swimming across. Very singular and interesting it was to see the great black ungainly fellows doing battle with the current, and floundering about, with their square nostrils just out of the water. We here learnt that they belonged to a party of Bhootias, who were taking them over to Sikkim, and who themselves were camping near the little bridge at the entrance of the gorge, but were nevertheless wholly unconscious of the straying of their kine.

Then before the night bird had ceased his plaint, we started on our homeward road, brushing through banks of ferns and the great heart-shaped bigonia, with its pink wax-like flowers smiling through tears of dew, which rained down upon us as we passed.

On the margin of the river a tree was growing, which our syces pointed out to us, and the fruit of which the natives use to poison fish. Saturating rice with a decoction of the poison, they throw it into the river, and the fish devouring it die, and floating to the surface, are easily taken. Then coming to a bend in the river, we saw a Lepcha paddling his canoe across the rapids—a rude bark, hollowed out of a tree—on his way to a little establishment of wood-cutters on the opposite bank, the smoke of whose fire, ascending in blue columns against the sombre background of trees, made a picture for an artist.

We reach the Rungheet guard-post at noon, and

halt, not only to give our ponies rest, but to partake of breakfast. The fire is soon lighted, and an omelette frizzling over it, which, with hunter's beef, is to form our frugal meal. Several of the baggage coolies have already arrived, but the one carrying the crockery basket is loitering in the rear; wherefore it is only truthful to confess, that, *faute de* dish, we eat it with all due solemnity out of the frying-pan!

When our ponies have rested sufficiently, we make another start. Threading our way through the mimosa thicket, we re-cross the little bridge, and pass beneath *pandanus palms, Gordonia,* and the ever stately sol; till, ascending, we leave these far behind, and entering a tea-plantation, zig-zag through miles and miles of tea bushes, and find ourselves in regions where the air blows chill. On, till we reach the plantation coolies' huts, all built close together, as if to keep each other warm. In the tall forest trees beyond, the thrush is carolling his evensong; and soon the less harmonious strains of the band reach us, playing

in the 'kiosk,' at the *Chow rusta*, whither each evening the beauty and fashion of the little station resort—a circumstance which has caused the profane to stigmatise it as the Temple of Gossip. Whether it be devoted to that Muse or not, it cannot always in truth be called the Temple of Harmony, for, although there is a battery of artillery at the military cantonment, no regiment is at present stationed there, it being rather a sanitarium for invalids. The band therefore is generally composed of men of various regiments, who have been sent here for health, and their performances, as they have no bandmaster to regulate them, are as a rule not of a very soul-inspiring nature. At this moment the trombone is carrying on a very imposing and conscientious bass on a single note in one key, whilst a sharp little piccolo, which sets one's teeth on edge, is indulging in coruscations in a shrill treble in another; the intermediate instruments, meanwhile, doing their best to complete the discord by an extemporaneous compromise between an accompaniment and variations of the 'air.' But, on the other hand, the drum, beaten by a muscular artilleryman, covers a multitude of sins and shortcomings, and a herd of approving jackals in the distance howls an encore.

Our homeward road lies through this gay and festive throng; but, feeling painfully conscious that our appearance is not rendered the more interesting by the out-of-doors life we have been leading, and unwilling to subject ourselves either to fair or unfair criticism, we steal round

by a path below—though by a longer route—which takes us through the outskirts of the Bhootia Busti, where the usual number of bipeds and quadrupeds of all sorts and sizes have to be ridden through and over, and where we ourselves get blinded with smoke, for the narrow pathway, leading us above the roofs of the little huts which cling to the hill-sides, occasionally affords us suffocating glimpses through the holes in the thatch, which are the primitive chimneys of these people. At length, entering the high road, we overtake a number of invalid soldiers lying in dhoolies, a kind of bed carried on men's shoulders —'ferocious dhoolies,' as they were once called in high quarters in England during the mutiny, having been mistaken for some wild hill tribe—which was hard upon them, to say the least of it; the pathetic rendering of the homeward dispatches being, that 'the ferocious Dhoolies came down and carried all the sick and wounded away!'

The poor fellows we pass have been sent hither from the scorching plains, with their fever-stricken and otherwise sickly frames, to grow strong and well, please God! in this pure and invigorating mountain air. It is, indeed, wonderful in how short a time they do so; that is to say, those who are suffering merely from the ordinary complaints incidental to the plains, there being few cases in which the sudden change of climate operates prejudicially. It is very sad to see some of these, who appear terribly ill and emaciated, leading one to fear that they may have been sent hither too late, and that Death

has already set his cold hand upon them. To one man, who seems much exhausted by his long journey, we give a little wine we happen to have with us in a pocket flask, for which he is very grateful; and turning his wan face towards F——, exclaims, 'Oh, sir! I never see such a beautiful country, never in my borned days;' but we tell him that he must wait till he reaches *Jellapahar*—the military cantonment—and sees the morrow's sun rise on the snow-clad peaks, to know what glory and sublimity are in nature. Ascending the steep, steep path that leads to the hospital, they are soon lost sight of in the gathering darkness; and rounding the spur of the hill and nearing our pretty mountain dwelling, the first things that attract our notice are two white specks on the lawn, which prove to be the tents pitched, which we are to take on our longer trip into the 'Interior.'

THE 'FEROCIOUS DHOOLIE!'

CHAPTER XVII.

AWAY TO THE SNOWS!

BESIDES thirty-two baggage coolies, we were to take four servants—viz. a kitmutgar, bearer, and two syces—exclusive of the *sirdar*, or head man, who is supposed to be responsible for the conduct of the rest, keep them up to their duties, and see that none cheat or take advantage of you but himself.

Six men were to be laden with tents, one with our small tent-stove, and two others with rum for the baggage coolies—a thing we were strongly advised to take a good supply of, as being very necessary on such an expedition, enabling them to resist not only cold but fever, to which night exposure invariably subjects them when they get into inclement heights. In addition to these, twelve were told off to carry tent furniture and travelling impediments generally, and the rest to carry my dandy.

A Bareilly dandy is a kind of reclining chair made of cane, and suspended by leather straps to a strong rim of wood, the shape of a boat, with a pole at each end. This was to be *my* mode of conveyance; F—— and C—— having decided to take ponies for themselves, being

sanguine enough to believe that they will ride the chief part of the way, for these strong little beasts are supposed capable of performing any gymnastic achievement, short of walking upon their heads: but there are limits to the *tempers*, as we have seen, if not to the capabilities, of the Himalayan pony, and whether they sustained their character to the end, or proved a delusion and a snare, will be seen hereafter.

Some little delay was caused by the difficulty our *sirdar* found in obtaining Lepchas to accompany us. They are said to make infinitely better servants than the Bhootias; but at the last moment we were compelled to content ourselves with fourteen of the latter tribe amongst our retinue.

I will not linger over the few days that preceded our departure, which were spent in wishing friends good-bye, and in making the thousand and one little arrangements necessary for such an expedition, and an absence of many weeks' duration from all civilisation. It had been settled between F—— and myself that Lattoo was not to go, at which on her side many bitter tears were shed; but for many reasons it seemed wiser that I should not take an ayah with me.

I was putting the finishing touches to my packing in the twilight, two evenings before we started, when she came with downcast eyes, and placing something in my hand, which I saw at a glance was the old silver charm-box that once belonged to her mother, said sorrowfully,

'Mem sahib go to bad country, where no trees, no flowers, no nothing grow, where the sun shines cold, and where men starve and die, the country of the dreadful moth.[1] Wicked spirits live in the rocks *thar*; take this and no harm come,—no take, plenty trouble.'

I looked involuntarily towards the window; a ghastly pallor had spread itself over the snowy peaks, which were bathed in glory but a few minutes before, and black clouds lowered overhead. The room was getting dark and chilly, and Lattoo looked so sad and earnest. Could it be true that unknown dangers lurked there? Were there wicked spirits inhabiting the rocks that could be charmed away? The next moment reason triumphed. 'No, child,' I exclaimed impatiently; 'take it away, I don't believe in charms.'

'Nae, mem sahib! but it contains Lama prayers.'

'God will protect us, Lattoo; we are going to see His beautiful mountains, and to learn more of Him and of His greatness in the works of His hand. Do not tease me so. I have no fear.'

Turning round I discovered that the room was empty. Lattoo had gone, leaving me abruptly, as she had so often done before. There was nothing strange in her doing so, but I felt sorry she had gone—I was not to see her again for many many weeks; and she looked so pale and sad, and I had meant to comfort, and

[1] There is a legend that a large moth exists in the interior of these mountain regions which causes the death of all whom it may touch.

speak tender words of parting to her, but instead of this I had spoken harshly. Poor child! How little I then thought what would happen to her ere I returned to Darjeeling!

The next day we dispatched our coolies, in company with those of our friend C——, numbering altogether fifty-eight—exclusive of fifteen he had already sent on—with instructions to proceed to Goke, a small guard-post fourteen miles distant, and to await our arrival there.

Each man carried not only the loads apportioned to him, but sufficient food for a week or two for himself also, consisting chiefly of rice and bhoota. Beyond that time C—— had made provision for them, by arranging with the Soubahs and Kajees[1] of the Rajah's territories, through which we should have to pass, to send supplies to meet us at the various points along our route, a thing they promised faithfully to do; but, alas! how has my confidence in princes been shaken for evermore! But I must not anticipate.

Had not C—— so arranged, we must have taken double the number of men, to convey sufficient food for the whole distance, as the way which we had decided to take lay over barren wilds, far above and beyond the reach of villages, where they might otherwise have replenished for themselves. There are no roads in the 'Interior,' or even pathways, and after leaving Darjeeling a very few marches behind, we shall have to follow the leading of our

[1] Agents and Finance Ministers.

instincts, and trust to the configuration of the distant mountains to guide us onwards.

As I stood at the window, watching the coolies one by one disappear beneath the hill with their loads, my pulse beat fast, and my heart throbbed; not, however, from the proud anticipation that we were about to travel amongst the most extensive and lofty mountains of the world, but—shall I confess it?—from misgivings lest, after all, the prophets of evil should be right, and I prove incapable of sustaining the fatigue of such a journey. Yonder lay the whole vast expanse of the Sub-Himalaya, Alp upon Alp, and wave upon wave of blue mountain, varying in height from eight to fourteen thousand feet, all of which we must cross before reaching even the *base* of the snowy range, fifty miles distant as a bird would fly, but nearly one hundred and fifty to us.

Several gentlemen had penetrated into the 'interior' by the direct route—viz. that along the valleys of the rivers Rungheet and Ratong—by which, until Jongli is reached—the highest point where yāks are grazed in the summer months—villages are frequently to be met with; but scarcely more than one European[1] had traversed the crest of the Singaleelah chain, the route which we had marked out for ourselves—and I was the first lady to explore the Eastern Himalaya by either way; so that it was no marvel, if I felt a few qualms, and a little trepidation, when our men had actually departed, and the irrevocable step was taken.

[1] This one is the eminent naturalist Dr. Hooker.

A friend through whose plantation we should have to pass on our first day's march, most kindly asked us to sleep at his house *en route*, as by so doing we should be enabled to reach our first camping-place, at Goke, early the following day. Accordingly, on a *Friday*—that inauspicious day—we make the grand start.

The rains, that usually break up about the beginning of October, had been protracted this year beyond all precedent, and there had been such a determined and steady down-pour for three days after our return from the Teesta, as can only be witnessed either in the Tropics, or in the mountainous districts of this land. But, most fortunately, the very day we decide to start, the weather clears; and as we descend the mountain steeps, the clouds which have gathered up are clinging in huge masses beneath their summits, whose rugged edges drag and hold them in their grasp like carded wool. Notwithstanding this, in the purpling valleys at our feet, a sea of leaden vapour is still floating, and, although the horizon above the highest peaks is bright and clear, there is a sharpness in their outline that has a suspicious look, auguring anything but the end of the rainy season. We are too happy, however, to admit of forebodings or ill omens of any kind: everything is *couleur de rose*; as indeed the sky is by this time, for the sinking sun is tingeing the Snows with his parting rays, whilst they tower, spire-like, upwards as if to see the last of him.

Emerging from a grove of tree-ferns, we can just

discern our tents, three or four thousand feet below, already pitched in readiness for us, looking like little white dots on the spur of a wooded hill; and reaching the house at six o'clock, we are welcomed in the verandah by our pretty hostess.

The house stands at an elevation of about 5000 feet, and although situated at rather too low an altitude for fine views generally, it commands a magnificent one of the eternal Snows, and a whole world of mountains, over which the monarch Kinchinjunga reigns supreme. It is a pretty little dwelling, not altogether unlike a Swiss châlet, having wooden balconies all round it, covered with the passion flower, Virginia creeper, and other climbing plants, and in every respect in perfect keeping with the surrounding scenery. A cup of fragrant tea awaits us in the verandah, such as is alone to be met with

at a planter's house—very few who partake in England of that which is dignified by the name, having the faintest notion of what a delicious thing it really is; adulteration, or mixing with inferior teas, taking place almost immediately after it leaves the plantation. Nor is quality the only desideratum to its perfection—new-made tea, even of the best, tasting very much like fresh hay with an additional flavouring of mint; and it is only after the third year that it acquires its full flavour. A lady residing in a tea district is consequently as particular in the age of her tea, as a gentleman is in that of his wine.

Dinner at seven; and a delightful evening afterwards, passed with music, and all the graceful *entourages* of an English home; and then, on saying 'good night,' a peep into the balcony—'just,' as our host said, 'to snatch *one* look at the snows,' upon which the moon had risen. The one look ended in our pacing it to and fro till midnight, all being unwilling to close our eyes on a scene so lovely.

The next morning after breakfast we take leave of our kind entertainers, and continue our descent through the plantation. Here again we see patient women gathering tea, their small babies, as usual, lying in baskets; and I come to the conclusion that, of all things living, there is nothing half so pretty as a Bhootia or Lepcha baby, with its tiny round face and large eyes, the size of the latter enhanced by *kohl*, with which the eyelids are painted. They smile at me as I pass them, lying quietly in their little baskets, but always wide awake; and I

cannot help wondering whether Bhootia or Lepcha babies ever sleep.

Sometimes I stop for an instant and chat with their mothers, winning their hearts by admiration of their children, then hasten on again, for F—— and C—— are both some distance in advance; but I can occasionally catch a glimpse of the tops of their helmets and alpenstocks as

they zig-zag beneath, whilst counting time to the heavy tramp-tramp of my bearers as they carry me along.

Zig-zagging still, and always descending, the heat becomes oppressive, and tropical vegetation begins. Clumps of pampas-grass, growing ten feet high, now enclose our pathway on either side; and I start involuntarily as its tall dry stems, rocking to and fro, creak and crack and knock against each other, as they will do, strangely

enough, even in the absence of the slightest breeze to stir the air; and I am reminded of the conventional tiger of my childhood, and see it breaking cover to spring upon the luckless traveller, as it did in my first picture-book.

But there are no tigers here, this not being the elevation for them; and leopards do not often leave their lairs till night-fall, and are by no means the formidable animals they are generally reputed to be, planters having repeatedly assured us that they seldom if ever attack man, being, on the contrary, much afraid of him. A child or feeble person they probably would attack if hungry, but not otherwise, preferring, as a rule, to dine off jungle fauna, their favourite prey being the 'barking deer.'

A few months ago, however, I did have a much nearer view of one than I at all appreciated, notwithstanding these assurances. I was sketching at mid-day in a gorge about five thousand feet below Darjeeling, where the most perfect and absolute solitude reigns, and where a river, unseen till approached quite closely, flows cradled in precipitous rocks, the water black in some places, from the deep shadow they cast upon its surface. Sitting on one of the boulders in mid-stream, an otter, or some other small animal, bounded out of the thick jungle to my right, and came down to the margin of the river to drink. Following slowly, with cat-like footsteps, as if it had been lying in ambush, a

leopard crept forth in pursuit, climbing one of the large stones on the bank, as though to watch its movements, and take his opportunity to pounce upon it. But, contrary to his expectations, instead of returning, his prey swam across the stream, and was soon lost sight of amongst the rocks and sand on the opposite side. The leopard followed a few yards, and then finding it had eluded his grasp, cast one regretful glance at its hiding-place, and almost as stealthily returned to the jungle whence it came.

I was terribly frightened, far too much so to make at the moment any demonstration of alarm, and my attendants in charge of my pony, being some distance off, knew nothing of my adventure. Had they been present, they would have fled to a certainty, leaving me to face the danger alone, for there is but little chivalry in natives; but as soon as I had recovered sufficient composure I summoned them to my side, and hastily packing up my sketch, which I had ridden so many miles to take, was soon on my homeward way.

On another occasion I was sketching with a friend in the very heart of a primeval forest, several thousand feet below Senshul, our men and ponies this time being bivouacked close beside us. Suddenly we heard the cries of a small animal proceeding from a place some hundreds of feet up the mountain. At length they grew fainter and fainter till they died away, and the forest was as silent as before. Half an hour or so had elapsed,

when the sound of cracking and crushing down of bushes reached us, as though something larger than the creature whose cries we had heard were forcing its way through the underwood. Almost immediately, about a hundred yards ahead of us, a tiger broke cover, and, leaping over the path, disappeared down the 'khud.' Scrambling our things together—and this time paying little heed to the safety of our pictures—our ponies were saddled, and we on them in a twinkling; and shrieking loudly, which we had been told natives always do in proximity to wild beasts, we started off at a hand gallop.

Our path unfortunately would of necessity lead us past the very spot where the tiger showed himself; but evening was approaching, the sun already sinking below the summit of the opposite hill, and there was nothing for it but to get out of the woods, and into the high road, as fast as possible. Reaching the spot, we felt little doubt, from the presence of a mountain streamlet, that he had followed its course down to a forest pool, to slake his thirst after his meal, for the fact of his making his appearance so soon after the cries I have mentioned led to the conjecture that he had killed and devoured some prey.

The next day we were told that a large tiger had been at Senshul the two previous nights, and carried off a goat each time. It is a very unusual thing for tigers to be heard of at this elevation, but I need scarcely say that I never ventured to sketch in one of these lonely and unfrequented forests again. My impression is that

persons might ride or walk through them for years, without meeting with such an adventure, for I believe that none of these animals would leave their lairs by day, if they heard but the slightest approach of man ; but if one sits silently sketching hour after hour, with one's attendants stretched on the ground fast asleep, the forest is as still as if wholly untenanted.

During this digression, we have been steadily descending the mountain, till we have left the tea plantation behind ; and now pass through dense jungle of bamboo, wild plantain or banana, the leafless cotton tree covered with scarlet blossoms, and the *cinchona*, with its delicate and exquisite sapphire bloom, beneath all of which is a fantastic undergrowth of aromatic wormwood, flowering shrubs, and ferns, each struggling for the mastery, and rank luxuriance everywhere.

At noon we reach the banks of a river—the Chota (little) Rungheet—having in four hours passed through various climates, till we are now in heat almost unbearable. F—— gathers some ripe lemons and pomiloes from a little plantation of fruit, under which we halt for shade, and with these we refresh ourselves in the scorching valley. The recent heavy rains having swollen the river to an unusual degree, it is found impossible to cross on our ponies, and we are therefore compelled to leave them behind in charge of the syces, trusting they will be able to follow us on the morrow.

Here we find a party of some fifteen or twenty

men, whom C—— sent on some days ago, engaged in the construction of a bamboo bridge, the permanent one of cane being out of repair, and consequently in an unsafe state for passengers; but the temporary bridge is so far from completion, that we determine not to wait for it, but cross the other as well as we can. It is almost severed in the centre, but with care we severally gain the opposite bank, and soon find ourselves toiling up the slope in blazing sunshine. The gentlemen, finding the climb very fatiguing, deplore the absence of their ponies; but I fare far better in my dandy, my bearers carrying me, four at a time, relieving each other at frequent intervals, until at two o'clock they land me on Goke spur.

This is a small frontier post, guarded by a few native soldiers, the Rinmām—a river we can hear plunging over its rocky bed on the other side of the hill—forming the boundary between British and independent Sikkim, just as the Teesta does between our territory and Bhootan; one of its chief objects being to prevent the Sikkimites from crossing over the border, and taking back British subjects as slaves, a proceeding of which some few years ago they were by no means unfrequently guilty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER CANVAS.

OUR tents, five in number, look exceedingly snug and comfortable; and very gladly do I take shelter in one of them from the fierce rays of the sun, for we are as yet at an elevation of scarcely more than three thousand feet. And what a peculiar fascination these little canvas homes possess for those who have never lived in one before. The low doorway, beneath which one has to enter; the compactness of the canvas walls; the fitness and suitability of everything—nothing superfluous, nothing really lacking; the *multum in parvo* style of its whole arrangements; the little square awning which forms a shelter to the aperture, all so small and doll-like; the lazy flapping of the canvas with every motion of the wind; the gentle twitter of birds, and subdued noises outside; the peep of the sweet country through the open doorway; the shadows on the sunlit grass; the blue of the distant hills; and the novelty of the whole thing, as one feels one's self for the first time a 'rover' in very earnest—all possess a charm that is perfectly indescribable. As I sit here I look out upon the cooking tent, where vigorous preparations for dinner are going on,

whilst a kettle is purring cheerily over another fire close by, all looking like a little framed picture; and though we have the blue sky for a canopy, and the green sward for a carpet, everything looks so completely the ideal of contentment and home, that I almost wish I had been born a gipsy.

C—— soon arrives, but F—— not for an hour later, frightfully knocked up by the heat and long climb, and I must confess that his feeling the fatigue of the first day's march so greatly, filled me with forebodings for the future, he being by no means the strongest of our trio.

Like the rest of us, however, he revived considerably on being informed that dinner was almost ready, and was nearly recovered when it was announced. On seeing him work his way valiantly through two cutlets, and survive all the vicissitudes of curried chicken, besides light skirmishing, in the shape of pastry and cheese, my anxieties took a different form, and the serious question arose within me, as to whether the alarming gastronomic capabilities which we all evince, fostered evidently by long marches in the open air, can be provided for on such an expedition as ours, whether the commissariat will hold out, and the supply be equal to the demand.

To-morrow being Sunday we halt here, and shall not start on our tour in real earnest until Monday. Nor are we sorry, for the scene from our camp, looking in a northerly direction, is peaceful and lovely in the extreme, and we are more than willing to linger in so fair a spot.

Southwards, however, rises the barren Chakoong, frequent landslips having laid it bare, as well as numerous watercourses, which scour down its sides in the rainy season. Skirting its ridge, a number of little black specks are seen, cutting into the sky with sharp outline: they are the houses at Jellapahar, the military depôt. Beneath them extend many thousand feet of sheer precipice, and the mountains in *this* direction are altogether unpleasing, the forests having been cut down to give place to tea-planting, every hill-side being studded with this uninteresting and irrepressible shrub. It is wonderful to what an extent this 'fever' prevails. It rages like a fierce epidemic in the neighbourhood of Darjeeling and Kursiong, where all who have money—except Government officials, who are prohibited—buy a few acres of land, and plunge into tea. Calcutta merchants and retired military officers have caught the mania; and even missionaries, sent from a foreign land to convey the everlasting truth to these 'benighted heathen,' have been known to succumb to the contagion, and, leaving their Gospel nets, to follow the multitude. F—— also was once numbered amongst the stricken, but, as I said before, men in the service of Government are forbidden from entering upon any speculation of the kind: and this I believe alone prevented our both falling victims to the contagion, for there is something very attractive in a planter's life, and I can imagine nothing so free, unfettered, and charming as that of these hills, where he has an admirable climate, glorious

scenery around him, and plenty of society—for whenever is a planter's house void of one or two pleasant guests, and where does a guest so completely enjoy himself or feel so thoroughly *à son aise* as there? Who else can give one so good a 'mount?' What merry pic-nics to the valleys! What delicious scampers over the mountains! What pleasant gatherings in the evening over cheery wood fires still live in my remembrance! Yet tea-planters have a great deal to answer for, in robbing these hills of so much of their beauty.

As the eye turns from civilization, that dire enemy of the picturesque, over in the direction of independent Sikkim, where Nature still holds her own, the scene changes completely, exhibiting picturesquely wooded mountains, and far down the valleys, here and there, little patches of fertile pasture land—a great relief after the tea-covered hills on the opposite side.

The sky is almost cloudless, and full of deliciously soft light. F—— reclines at the tent door, smoking, and the combined influence of the dinner, the weed, and the monotonous humming of bees in the bushes behind us, seems to have produced a somnolent effect. He sits, his head thrown back, and his eyes shut, the very picture of languid content, only opening them occasionally, to watch the smoke from his cheroot curl upwards, with all the grace it can on such a lazy afternoon, and then shutting them again with an expression of greater contentment than before. He is enjoying the *dolce far niente*,

poor fellow, of which he knows so little. Surely, to enjoy, and thoroughly appreciate rest, one must have been a hard worker.

I throw myself down at his feet on the long grass that is waving gently like a summer sea, and remark now and then on the beauty and grandeur that lie

spread around us. How those fleecy clouds hang lazily beneath that mountain peak, lingering on their way as if they felt it was time enough to sail when they had wind to help them along, but that to-day they meant to take life easily, like everything else. Or, See! how that cloudlet has got entangled among the branches of that tope of trees yonder, which crowns the summit of the hill, and that one there to westward, left far behind its fellows, is lying snugly in a sleepy hollow, where it intends apparently to remain. I am only answered by a good-tempered half

apologetic growl, or at most, a scarcely audible monosyllable; and he closes his eyes more firmly than before, as if to make me understand that though 'speech' may be 'silvern, silence is gold.'

Overhead the mosquitoes hover in myriads between us and the sky, but are too indolent to bite, so long as the sun shines.

'Gnats!' growls F——, in reply to my soliloquy that I fear they will attack us the very instant it sets; and throwing the end of his cigar away, he subsides into sleep.

From below comes the distant sound of voices, and I observe C——, his hands buried in the depths of his capacious pockets, talking to a little knot of guardsmen; whilst the women-kind come creeping up timidly, to have a side-long peep at him.

But shadows soon begin to lengthen, and everything betokens the gradual approach of eventide. The butterflies no longer flit from spray to spray, but go hurrying off whilst daylight lasts, in quest of 'leafy tents' beneath which to screen themselves from the heavy dews of night. C—— has finished his gossip, and gone for a stroll, and the silence is broken only by the distant crowing of a cock in the village below, or the dreamy chirp of a little bird, still hovering far up in the heavenly blue; and these only seem to add to the stillness of the hour.

Thousands of feet above, the rugged mountains are

standing out boldly against the clear sky, now fast fading from blue to tender grey. Soft arrows of light dart through the thin haze which floats between our camp and the distance, and twilight gently falls upon *us*, although the barely perceptible houses on the ridge of Chakoong are still basking in full sunshine,—their windows, concentrating its rays, blazing away like day-stars.

Darkness does not come on so rapidly here as in the tropics, but no sooner has the sun disappeared beneath the mountains, than everything changes as if by magic. The crimson and yellow lights die out, and nature wraps herself in a gloomy mantle of purple and cold grey. The little bird descends to his nest in rock or tree, and the villagers to their huts, now sending forth columns of smoke in the preparation of their evening meal. C—— returns from his walk, and F——, awaking with a start, is quite sure, as day sleepers always are, that he has not been asleep at all.

We all now assemble round the camp-fire, which is crackling merrily. There is a chilliness in the air, and its warmth is pleasant. When evening has quite closed in, we repair to the dining-tent, and C——, producing a ponderous volume of Kaye's 'Sepoy War,' reads aloud for the general behoof. But no sooner have we settled ourselves, than we are beset by a crowd of insects of all sorts and sizes, which come about us like the hosts of Midian. Flying ants, green locusts, the latter varying from two to three inches in length, and a supremely loathsome

creature familiarly called 'the carpenter,' but by the natives 'dene,' and others of a different kind, that look when flying like little fat men with their hands in their pockets, all make their appearance, attracted by the lamp, which they possibly mistake for an untimely moon, and come hopping, flying, crawling, as their several modes of progression prompt them. They crawl up our sleeves and down our necks, and, ah me! flounder about in my hair, for they are no respecters of persons or things; whilst from the opposite side of the table I watch the movements of one big fellow, on the light fantastic toe, pirouetting before me continually, as though he were performing for my especial amusement. By its side is an insect of the graver sort, a praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*)—if anything of such gigantic proportions can reasonably be called an insect, whose body, not counting its horns, is three inches long if it is one; nor do I exaggerate, for has not F—— many of them as large, and larger too, in his cabinet at home? but IMPALED, thank heavens! their bodies safely stuffed with cotton wool.

The above signification is given to this insect on account of the curious position it assumes. Raising the two front legs, or rather *arms*, it elevates its long thorax likewise, and moves the head from side to side in a continuous see-saw motion. It is very amusing to watch

from a respectful distance, and all are doubtless alike charming to the entomologist; but I, at any rate, have not come out to study natural history under this form, and matters growing worse as their numbers increase, we are obliged at last to take refuge in the darkness of our own tent. But our troubles even here are not altogether at an end, for we are followed by mosquitoes, which attack us unmercifully. Having been residents of the mountains for so long a time, we are quite unaccustomed to these little bloodthirsty tormentors of the lower elevations; but I console F—— by saying they are only the 'gnats' which were sporting above our heads so inoffensively in the afternoon, and I fall asleep at last, wondering whether, after all, travelling in the Himalaya is so very delightful as I anticipated.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RIMMĀM.

OPENING my tent door at peep of day, before the camp is astir, I let in the pure morning air. The flowers are trembling under their weight of dew, and pale vapours still hang in the valleys, waiting the sun's rising to bear them upwards. Reclining within my little tabernacle, I watch it ascend behind the hill tops like a ball of fire, when the mists melt away beneath its thirsty beams, to fall again at eve, perhaps, upon some more distant valley, in nature's wondrous cycle.

It is Sunday, and breakfast over we have a short Service in the dining tent, and later in the day go down to the Rimmām, of whose beauties we had all heard so much; C——, in anticipation of our visit, having dispatched a detachment of coolies last evening, to clear the narrow pathway from jungle, with which it was completely overgrown. Starting at 3 P.M.—I in my dandy, and the gentlemen walking—we descend for a considerable distance through a copse, till we come to the ridge of a mountain, which stretches along for half a mile, and separates the valley of the Rimmām from that of the

Chota Rungheet. So narrow is this ridge, that we can see the valleys, two thousand feet below, on either side, without changing our position in the least.

Through that to the left, the broad Rimmām is seen wending its way over its rough bed of 'gneiss,' to swell the waters of the Great Rungheet, and flowing onwards with a dignified and subdued roar, as though it felt it had a duty to perform, and meant to do it conscientiously. To the right winds the Chota Rungheet, an offspring, I believe, of the river of the same name, which I described in a former chapter. How it babbles and frets itself into waves, shuffling along in a fussy and consequential manner, as most small things do, not only covering its banks with foam, but dodging in and out, and forcing its way into nooks and corners, where it would seem to have no business whatever; sometimes rushing into the very heart of the forest, and creating little islands of solitary trees; then again forming the letter S in its gambols, and flirting with the stones on its margin, coquetting like a young thing that never knows its own mind! And what a noise it makes in its onward progress; till, fairly tired out, it sleeps in the forest awhile where the shade is thickest, but only to show itself again further on in the distance, as sportive and restless as before!

The trunks of the sol trees here are covered with epiphytical ferns, whose fronds, extremely rigid, measure four or five feet in length. Each tree is encircled by

several of these singular coronets, which from a distance have all the appearance of gigantic shuttlecocks.

At length we follow the extreme edge of a rocky precipice, and the path becomes very dangerous; but soon after this we reach the white banks of the Rimmām, where tall trees, rich in foliage and flowering climbers, are growing in tangled masses close to its margin.

The river winds through a narrow gorge, and the surroundings are wild and beautiful in the extreme, grandeur alternating with the picturesque; for the mountains, although very precipitous, are clothed with magnificent forest, whose exquisite gradation of green baffles all description, relieved, were relief necessary, by large boulders of brown 'gneiss' which project everywhere; whilst a peak, twelve thousand feet high, dominates and seems to sentinel the whole. But time is on the wing, and we have to turn our backs upon all this beauty almost as soon as we behold it, for our return cannot occupy less than two hours. Casting therefore one lingering glance around, to impress the scene if possible more deeply on the memory, I resume my seat in my dandy, and we wend our way slowly upwards to our encampment, which we reach in the twilight.

The first objects that arrest our attention are our three ponies, which the syces had brought across during the day, the torrent having subsided. Greatly to our surprise, too, we find an addition to our camp in the person of a young Bhootia woman, the wife of one of my bearers.

Fanchyng—that was not quite her name, but it is as nearly like it as I could ascertain, and is the one by which she will be known hereafter—would be good-looking but for the flatness of her face. Her dress, however, like that of all her race, is pretty, with plenty of colour in

it, so that she makes by no means an unpleasing picture in the landscape.

The morning was lovely on which we struck tents, and set forth on our first march towards the frontier of Nepaul, where C——, hoping to combine a little official business with pleasure, expects to meet three diplomatic agents from the court of Jung Bahadoor, to inspect the boundary line between Nepaul and British territory, which has become somewhat ill-defined in consequence of the natives having destroyed the pillars, or landmarks, in search of treasure, which they imagined to have been originally buried beneath them.

The country through which we pass is highly culti-

vated, the mountain steeps, where practicable, being cut into terraces—a very favourite mode of cultivation with the Nepaulese, who are rather scientific agriculturists. Indeed, terracing is the only manner of culture possible in these mountainous districts. Our road takes us through

two pretty little villages, surrounded by hills covered with millet and bhoota, cultivated in like manner. Nothing could be more snug and peaceful than these homesteads, the women, as usual, models of industry, either spinning or weaving bright-coloured fabrics in their triangular

looms. Work of every kind, however, is suspended as we arrive. They descend from their huts and surround our people, asking the news—for have they not come from the big world, and are they not citizens of that great Babylon, Darjeeling?

The mothers, too, hold up their children for our inspection, which they here carry in 'sarees,' slung round the neck; whilst their little heads dangling outside sway backwards and forwards in a way that would soon make jelly of the brains of an English child. When a little older they are carried upon the hip, and it is amusing to see how the tiny creatures hold on, even when the mother's arms are both occupied. She merely gives them a maternal shove, now and again, as she trips along, holding a basket on her head with one hand and a 'lota' in the other, and they cling to her side like monkeys.

In the centre of each village we observed a cluster of many-coloured flags suspended on long bamboo poles, indicating the existence of a temple consecrated to their Deity; the temple itself being a building with two or three roofs, thatched like the surrounding huts, but each roof becoming smaller as it approaches the top, after the manner of a pagoda; whilst the flags were covered with writings in an unknown tongue, containing portions of the Hindoo scriptures translated into Thibetan or Nepaulese.

Close to our path was a shed, in which an old man, contrary to all custom, was grinding alone at the

conventional mill—that operation being confined all over India, as in olden times, to women. The old patriarch, as he ground away, kept shaking his head perpetually; perhaps he was afflicted with the palsy, but, under the circumstances, it gave one the idea that he was moralising on the gossiping propensities of women.

Our climb over, we find ourselves on an open moor, surrounded by blue and rugged mountains, and see the men of our camp, in 'pictorial rags' and single file, hurrying on before us—a procession which extends for fully half a mile.

We reach camping ground at five o'clock, and having made a considerable ascent the greater part of the way, are once more in sight of the Snows, which we were unable to see at Goke, but which greeted us like old friends the moment we reached the top of the hill, or rather mountain, for we are again at an altitude of six thousand feet.

Below, in a pretty hollow, our tents are pitched, in readiness for our arrival; and at seven o'clock we dine. After dinner, great progress is made in the 'Sepoy War,' insect life being less abundant than at our last place of encampment; but although this is the case, we have a new sensation in the shape of frogs. Really in these days our experiences remind one of the seven plagues of Egypt. They do not enter our tents, happily, but congregate outside in myriads, the sound they produce being precisely that of an infinite number of policemen's rattles.

As the chirp of the grasshopper is united with it, the din becomes almost unbearable; and one feels persuaded, from the deafening noise they make, that there cannot be a single inch of ground for many miles that does not possess its own particular frog and its own peculiar grasshopper. Occasionally all stop, without any apparent rhyme or reason, when the silence becomes almost painful, the ear having grown accustomed to the sound. Then suddenly, as if by word of command, all begin again; and so on till dawn appears, when the chorus gradually subsides.

Studies by the way-side.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST SWEET THING IN BOOTS.

THE next thing which strikes a person unaccustomed to tent life, is the way each article of furniture has of adapting and accommodating itself to its circumstances. Tables, never suspected of having joints, fold into such a wonderfully small compass, that one could almost carry them in one's pocket; couches double up like chess-boards, lamps take to pieces and fit into boxes, which look utterly incapable of containing them. In short, nothing retains its own individuality, but becomes for the nonce something else which it never was intended to be.

Folding tents at ten o'clock, we make for Mount Tongloo, our first halting place on the Singaleelah Range. As we approach it, the sides of the mountains become better wooded; and after an hour's march through blazing sunshine, we enter a forest, and a steep climb is before us.

To those who have never witnessed the marvellous luxuriance, beauty, and picturesqueness of the primeval forests of the Himalaya, any faithful description must seem an exaggeration, where trees, in every stage of youth,

maturity, and slow decay, have been left since the creation to germinate, and grow, and wither, and die, wholly untouched by the hand of man. Here and there stand dead trees: who shall venture to conjecture even, how many centuries they have been thus standing? Their hollow trunks not only form the home of the wild deer, but furnish a covert for the more tender kinds of ferns and orchids, which, like sentient things, have sought shelter within them from the wind and weather. Fallen trees lie everywhere, and these are hidden, except in form, by lycopodia of emerald green, with which the ground is carpeted more than ankle deep. And when I speak of lycopodia, do not picture to your imagination the fragile, stunted, and effete productions you see in greenhouses in England, but rigid masses of vegetation stretching out their broad fans, and covering everything with a garment of living luscious green. In other places the ground is taken possession of by the stag moss (thus named from its keen resemblance to antlers), which trails along the ground whole yards in length. Climbers of rich amber, and red, and green, wave like banners over head, and nature revels in every variety of form and colour. The sun, as if jealous of exclusion from this fair Eden, struggles to gain entrance, and glinting sideways through the thick foliage, dapples all things far and near with patches of golden light.

We halt here to give our ponies rest—I, too, have ridden to-day; and throwing ourselves on nature's carpet,

we watch the fire being kindled, and the water boiled for tea, than which nothing is half so refreshing or invigorating to travellers in these regions, no matter what may be the time of day; whilst the smoke curling upwards, the red glow of the fire, the bright-robed figures sitting round it, some smoking, and some chatting, make a marvellously picturesque scene, and create a perfect festival of colour. Then the baggage coolies overtake us, clothed in their parti-coloured garments of red, brown, purple, and orange, of which some portion of their dress is always composed, contrasting wonderfully with the prevailing green around. Our shepherd too passes us, heading a little procession of quadrupeds, whose destiny is mutton; also a cow and calf, which, slowly following, nibble the succulent herbage as they go along. Sometimes the tired coolies may be seen resting their loads, without removing them from their shoulders, by placing the strong staff which each one carries for the purpose, beneath the load to support it, thus taking the weight off himself. Indeed, wherever one looks there is a subject for a picture. But the longest, and, as our people assure us, the most difficult, part of our march lies before us; so, gathering up travelling bags and shouting for ponies, we are again under weigh.

Proceeding onwards by a gradual ascent, we enter

what in these mountains is termed a 'dripping forest,' for at some elevations cloud and vapour, almost perpetually driving through them, hang about the tops of the trees, and cause them to drip with moisture. In such forests, *transparent* ferns of various kinds grow epiphytically, the trunks and branches of the trees being literally hidden in some instances by these 'children of the mist.' They are as transparent as tissue paper, and of an exceedingly dark but vivid green, and of the innumerable lovely things which nature has lavished upon this highly favoured land, they are, I think, the loveliest of all.

After a short time the path becomes so exceedingly steep, that progress is by no means easy, and, a little further still, an almost perpendicular ascent awaits us. Trees are growing upon it, but their roots are so exposed from the washing away of the earth during the rains, that it is a marvel how they manage to maintain any hold on the soil at all. Here we leave our ponies, which appear to have almost more than they can do to scramble up themselves. The poor little beasts have already been on their knees so often, as the loose stones and earth gave way beneath their feet, that even had it been less steep, we should have preferred our alpenstocks. The task of climbing had been rendered comparatively easy, as far as I was concerned, by F——, who before our departure conceived the very original idea of my wearing 'mocassins,' not only as being warm and comfortable to the feet, but also as an assistance in

climbing. These mocassins are of Bhootia manufacture, and made of different pieces of coloured cloth, firmly stitched together in grotesque patterns, the soles, which are half an inch thick, being of closely knitted twine. The Bhootias, except when very poor, invariably wear these articles of attire; and very great was the general amusement on starting this morning, to behold the '*mem sahib*' thus equipped for the climb.

Having been made expressly for me, they are very magnificent in the matter of device and colour; but, I pray you! look at the sweet expression of the ankle, from a side view, and tell me whether the bare fact of my ever consenting to wear them at all, does not manifest a total absence of female vanity, and a perfect indifference to external appearances. I must confess, however, that I get on famously with them, although I am obliged to climb on hands and knees in some places, where there are no roots, or branches of trees, to hold out friendly hands to help one up. As one stops to breathe occasionally, how singular it is to look above and below, and watch the coolies, with their picturesque baskets, toiling upwards, but shouting with laughter, for these simple mountaineers are always merry and light-hearted, and nothing daunted by fatigue.

Nearing the summit of the mountain, we are greeted

by the welcome sound of the hammering of tent-pegs into the ground, which assures us that we cannot be far from encampment. A little further climb, and we see our tents being pitched, and, quite as welcome a sight to mountaineers—for these bracing breezes are sadly provocative of hunger—the evening repast once more in course of preparation.

It is wonderful in how short a time all is quiet and repose in camp; but unless we are fortunate enough to arrive after tents are pitched, the scene seems one of hopeless confusion. Some seventy men may be seen tearing about in all directions like maniacs—some hurrying off to fetch water; some cutting down wood for fires; others clearing the ground for the tents, the whole operation accompanied by a tremendous hubbub and confusion of tongues. There is a perfect chorus of shouts and yells; and as these nomad races, belonging to the southern class of the Turanian family, have each a separate language of their own, the Babel can be easily imagined. Neither do these Arabs 'fold up their tents and silently steal away,' for the breaking up of camp is an equally noisy process. But in an almost incredibly short space of time after reaching encampment, tents are not only pitched, but furnished; the little striped 'dhurries,' or carpets, are laid down, stoves lighted—for we are now at an altitude where fires are necessary—kettles boiling over them, and everything wearing as snug an appearance as possible.

On starting, we were told we should reach Mount

Tongloo to-day, but instead of this, we now learn that it is still fully ten miles distant, and we are encamped in forest so dense and impenetrable, that not a glimpse of sky can be seen. As soon as evening approaches, but long before it has fairly set in, we are consequently surrounded by Cimmerian darkness. We dine by lamplight, and then sit outside, watching the gleaming of the camp fires throughout the forest, which they illumine far and near. Mysterious figures, looking black and weird against the red light, flit to and fro, now appearing, now disappearing into the darkness again, like demons of the glade. We count no fewer than seventeen of these fires, exclusive of the one round which we are sitting, and the effect of the whole is more wild and witch-like than I can find words to describe.

In another hour the whole camp has assumed an attitude of repose, and everyone lies stretched at full length upon the ground. Time passes as we sit tranquilly discoursing, till the only sound that breaks the stillness is that of the subdued voices of those who are not yet slumbering, and the cracking of the wood as it slowly burns away.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GLIMPSE OF THE 'CELESTIAL CITY.'

THE following morning at the usual hour we struck tents and began our march, singing Mendelssohn's 'Farewell to the Forest,' and after two hours' further climb were glad to find ourselves in the open, where we could once more breathe freely. Coming to a narrow but well-trodden pathway, which we had to follow for some considerable distance, we were led to conjecture that we must be approaching some village; nor were we wrong, for, crossing a deliciously clear mountain stream on our ponies, we entered a 'sacred grove.' Here we were met by a motley group of women, apparently in holiday attire. They had probably seen our approach from a distance, or been informed of it by C——'s advanced guard of sappers, as we call them—coolies who invariably precede us by some hours, to cut down jungle, clear paths, or make them where none exist, the latter being generally the case.

A 'sacred grove' is nothing more or less than a piece of primeval forest left undisturbed, usually standing in an open space, to which pilgrimages are made, and which we desecrate, not only by halting in it, but by

ordering the immediate preparation of a very substantial 'tiffin.' Then, feeling in a more genial frame of mind, I walk along to the women, who are watching us with much curiosity from some little distance, and through Narboo, an interpreter whom C—— has brought in his retinue, I am able to some extent to exchange civilities.

At first I can get nothing out of them, one and all covering their faces shyly with their 'sarees;' but when I have proved myself tame by the sacrifice of a few silver coins, they become more communicative, and, approaching closely, proceed to make a minute examination of my dress; upon which I request them to show me their jewellery, these daughters of Eve being heavily laden with massive silver ornaments, in the shape of bangles, ear-rings, anklets, and *ceintures* round the neck and

waist, from which the usual amulets are suspended, containing sacred relics. 'Fine feathers' do not make 'fine birds' in this instance, however, for the women themselves are exceedingly ugly, far more so than usual, having strongly marked Tartar features.

F—— and C—— now join me, and, standing in their helmets in the centre of the group, they look like Christian and Faithful in 'Vanity Fair.'

Leaving the 'sacred grove' behind, we presently reach the region of 'hill bamboo,' a small species, the canes of which are scarcely more than an inch in diameter. Wherever the eye wanders no other tree is visible; and we have very soon to make our way through a forest of it, the narrow path being damp and slushy with black mud, as the sun's rays never penetrate the thick mass of feathery foliage, which forms a perfect arch above our heads. In some places the path is so entirely choked with the wilderness of straight stems, that we cannot see a yard before us, and the whole is dark and vault-like, each cane being covered with a damp moss, whilst the atmosphere itself is saturated with moisture. Not a bird or insect seems to live within it, and the only sound that greets us is the crashing and cracking of the canes, as we fight our way along. On this occasion I take care to make my bearers keep well up with the gentlemen, for the gloom is painfully oppressive, and I would fain not be alone. They are, of course, walking, the foliage in some places

hanging too low to admit of their passing under it on their ponies. On one or two occasions my dandy itself gets so hopelessly jammed, that those who are off duty have literally to cut the canes away before we can be released.

But all this is great fun to the merry-hearted Lepchas, who become quite uproarious in their mirth.

With our conventional English notions concerning the bearing of the lower classes to the upper, and also from our experience of the almost servile and effeminate manners of the Bengalee, it takes some little time to

accustom oneself to the familiarity of these hill men, and to their noisy behaviour towards each other in our presence; but one soon learns to regard them as so many overgrown children, perfectly easy of control, simple-minded and gentle of heart, a people who will not shrink even from personal danger to do you a kindness.

We are all more or less affected by our surroundings; and just as the sailor who has his 'business on the mighty waters' is, as a rule, more open to good influences, and more ready to do a kind and generous action, than other men, so these mountaineers, surrounded as they are from morn till eve by scenes of such surpassing grandeur, possess natures bold, rugged, and incapable of the meanness and cowardice often seen in the dwellers of the plains, to whom they are in almost every respect infinitely superior.

The greater number of my bearers belong to the Lepcha tribe; but two amongst them are Bhootias, one of whom we call Hatti (elephant), on account of his great size and strength. He is unquestionably the tallest and most powerful man I ever saw; the other is almost equally tall, but of slighter build, and to him we have given the soubriquet of Nautch-wallah (dancer). This latter fellow possesses the most exuberant and irresistible spirits, and when not engaged in carrying my dandy, beguiles the way by dancing in advance of us like Pan, or some old satyr, in the happy days of Arcadia, accompanying his gyrations with shouts and snatches of wild Thibetan song.

Though a Bhootia, he has much more of the merry Lepcha in his composition than is usual in his class. He possesses their twinkling, laughing eye, and their keen sense of the ludicrous, and had cut a hole in the top of his conical Chinese cap, evidently for the sole purpose of enabling his hair, which he wears in a knot, to pass through it, and add to his otherwise grotesque appearance.

Vaulch-wallah in repose

There are also two Lepchas amongst my bearers in whom I take especial interest. The former, a poor half-witted creature, we call Tatters, and they themselves Pugla-wallah (fool); the other, a pretty, effeminate-looking little man, with large contemplative eyes like a Brahmin cow, I have surnamed Rags, as his own name is utterly unpronounceable.

Most of their names, however, are pretty much alike, which is exceedingly puzzling and perplexing, as nearly all of them end in 'oo.' Thus we have already in our camp Atchoo, and Googoo, and Joojoo, and Fanchoo, and Jumnoo, and Nimboo, and Narboo, and Catoo, and Kidderoo, and any other number of 'oos' you please.

By this time I have discovered that the having bearers of different heights is a wise arrangement in these undulating wilds, for, when ascending, the short men invariably carry the front pole, and the tall ones the

hinder, and *vice versâ*, changing positions as circumstances require, so that, except in very steep gradients, my dandy is seldom very much out of the horizontal.

Still ascending, we come into the region of rhododendron trees of enormous size. Travelling at this time of year, we unfortunately lose most of the forest flowers, both the magnolia and rhododendron blooming in April; but we pass many *daphne*, or 'paper' trees, as they are proverbially called, and these at some elevations greet us with their luscious perfume even before we approach them. The Nepaulese manufacture paper very extensively from this tree, an art which was well known amongst the Ancients, who produced it from the *liber*, or inner bark, of trees.

And now at last we reach the summit of Mount Tongloo, and descry our encampment a little beneath it on the other side.

What a pretty scene it is to look down upon, that busy, hurrying hive!—the spot they have chosen being a little hollow, that seems to have been scooped out of the mountain by some giant hand. The ground is covered with long grass, which, together with the higher ridges, is studded with the blossoms of the *immortelle*, its little white flowers, and scarcely less white leaves, giving to everything the appearance of hoar-frost.

At this elevation—10,000 feet above sea level—we naturally expect wondrous views of mountain and vale;

but to the north all is hidden in mist, whilst from the west we are completely shut out by the still greater heights of Nepaul. Nothing daunted, however, we all set off, after a short rest, to ascend them, and soon find ourselves standing upon the frontier of that country, overlooking its 'Terai'—the almost boundless plains.

We had ascended the heights in a westerly direction, and were struck speechless when, on turning round, we beheld a scene described by one who has visited the four quarters of the globe as 'unequalled in grandeur and magnificence in the whole world of God's creation,' the stupendous pile of snow seeming within a day's march.

In one long line, stretching away as far as eye can reach, peak rises above peak in 'spotless procession.' In the centre, as if guardian of the whole, Kinchinjunga, with a dignity not of earth, rears its glittering crest, extending upwards, till there seems to be no separate earth or heaven, but both are joined in one. Flanking it on either side are peaks of somewhat lesser magnitude; to the right, Pundeem, its stately and almost *severe* form crossing diagonally the vast glacial valley of Kinchin. Further still to the right, rises the graceful and delicate outline of Nursyng, its jagged pinnacles, one above another, looking like giant steps, all culminating in the needle-like point that forms its summit.

To the left, or westward, the massive Kubra rears its

head, 24,000 feet in height, and Jumnoo 20,000, dominating numerous smaller peaks at its base. Beyond these, really forming one unbroken line, although hidden from this spot by the pine-clad summits of the Singaleelah range, are the snowy peaks of Nepaul, the loftiest of which, Mount Everest, 29,000 feet, is the highest mountain in the world; Kinchinjunga, exceeding 28,000 feet, being the next in rank.[1]

Nearer, are the mountains of the Sub-Himalaya, Pemionchi, Powhenny, Hee, and others, rising in 'wavy curvature.' Beneath these flow torrents over *débris* hurled from the heights above.

Far away eastward, in the soft distance, hidden by mist but a few minutes ago, but now exposed to view, as though some magic hand had withdrawn the veil, heave the delicately lovely snows of Thibet, the most conspicuous of which, and certainly the most singular in form of the whole vast region of peaks, is Chumalari, 23,900 feet.

Below the line of perpetual congelation are deep chasms —gashes in the solid rock, caused either by watercourses of melted snow, wearing it away in successive ages: or by the rending force of earthquakes, which are frequently felt even at Darjeeling, many houses bearing marks of their violence in cracks several inches wide, which

[1] Almost every map has a different spelling for this latter mountain. It is occasionally spelt Kanchanjanga, Kunchinjunga, and Kinchinjinga; but I have adhered to the local pronunciation and spelling of the word.

in some instances have severed the walls from top to bottom. Two years ago, in consequence of a severe shock of one of these terrible convulsions of nature, the church fell. A year later, the outer wall of one of the strongest houses in the station, the private residence of the Head-Master of St. Paul's School, was levelled to the ground from the effects of a previous shock, for about this time we were visited by a succession of earthquakes, no less than five occurring within the space of two months.

Whilst gazing on the snowy world around us, an indescribable something creeps over the scene—a something one feels, rather than actually sees—a kind of palpable silence.

It is the moment of the sun's farewell: he has this instant sunk below the highest peak, and Earth begins to mourn his departure. For one brief period colour fades; then, gathering up her forces, she speeds him on his way with high festival of gorgeous colour, and the whole becomes one shimmering sea of crystal, in which are golden cities, with towers of jasper and onyx, and shining fortresses, and minarets, and 'many mansions;' and I felt as though, like Christian standing on the Delectable Mountains, I saw the vision of the Celestial City. Far beneath, the rocky billows upon which less snow is lying, are wrapt in every soft gradation of bronze and crimson, gradually melting into violet; thence into dark blue, till deeper, deeper still, the saddened

earth, mourning in secret, clothes herself in a sombre garb of grey, and all colour is lost in the dark and silent valleys, where a belt of white vapour shrouds the rivers as they flow.

We stood entranced, none of us breaking silence, our feelings too deep for utterance. As we watched the opal lights die out, one by one, that solemn, death-like pallor crept over them, which only those who have seen the sun set on perpetually snow-clad mountains, or stood in a chamber visited by the 'beckoning angel,' just when the soul has passed away, can imagine. I shudder involuntarily, for we seem surrounded by a pale world of death, and we all now turn away, glad to hear our own voices and view other scenes.

Walking to the verge of the plateau, southwards, we look down upon the plains of Nepaul, stretching away into the very sky, for a miasmatic mist is lying like a quivering belt along the horizon, and both are softly blended into one.

Broad shining rivers—like fairy streamlets at this distance—intersect the whole expanse, and wind away till they too are lost in the misty horizon, now growing colder and more dim in the fast-increasing twilight, and everything is exquisitely soft and dreamy. Pale stars, too, begin to steal out timidly, as though they were not quite sure it is time to shine, or as if dazzled by the long red streak of remaining day which still lingers in the western sky.

Then through the sweet evening stillness the murmur of distant voices reaches us from our camp, and for once we turn a deaf ear to the announcement, soon made, that dinner awaits our return. Hungry, as, alas! we always are, we actually tarried to worship, till a chilliness creeping over us compelled us to descend.

Dinner ended, F—— goes out to smoke his cheroot over the fire, which is burning merrily close to the dining-tent; and C—— follows him, not in his 'vicious' habit, however, for he is no smoker, but to prolong an argument they got into whilst sitting over their wine; and I wander about the camp like an unquiet ghost. Presently the moon glides up behind the rhododendron trees; and feeling sure I shall not be missed if I climb the heights once more, to see how all looks by moonlight, I summon Panchyng, to whose ministrations I had some days ago committed myself, and who bids fair, with a slight amount of teaching, to become a rough but useful ayah; and off we start, as free as air, never thinking of such unpleasant possibilities as *bears*, which I believe do occasionally roam the mountains at this elevation, for in these days I knew no fear.

The stars are wide awake by this time, and, notwithstanding the moon's rivalry, shining like diamonds in the sapphire heavens. But the snows, as I feared would be the case, are entirely hidden by the white vapour which we had observed lying far down the valleys earlier in the evening, and which was now hanging in spectral and

shadowy masses about the peaks; while the moon, throwing a shower of silver over objects far and near, and illuminating rock, and bush, and tree, casts shadows deep and mysterious everywhere.

What a change had come over the spirit of the scene since I first beheld it! Colour is truly music to the eye, yet moonlight has a language all its own, speaking to the heart with a more peaceful and refined utterance. It is the sadder music of the minor tone, inexpressibly tender, calling up higher thoughts, and purer aspirations than merry, laughing sunshine ever can.

Walking over the crisp sward—for it is freezing hard—I recall to memory a Greek poem F—— once read and translated for me, about 'Holy Night;' and reaching the edge of the plateau, with Fanchyng by my side, I find myself looking again over the broad expanse of plains, now vague and indistinct as dream-land. The rivers, threading their silent way like bands of silver, are but just visible, whilst the nearer mountains of Nepaul, rising out of the plains, being covered with a thin veil of atmosphere, seem hovering between earth and sky.

Fearing that my absence would be discovered if I delayed longer, and that F—— might be thrown into a state of alarm in consequence, we hastily retrace our steps, treading down at every foot-fall the little white blossoms of *immortelle*, which, glistening beneath their crystals of hoar-frost, look like myriads of tiny asteroids.

I find on reaching camp that my absence has not

been discovered. Both F—— and C—— are still sitting where I left them; and, F——'s cigar finished, they have muffled themselves up in rugs and shawls, in such strange gipsy-like fashion, that, as they lean over the fire in eager confab, their dark figures have a curiously weird effect, needing only a cauldron to make them the personification of the witches in Macbeth.

As I entered the tent, and took up a book to beguile the time, something fell to the ground that had been lying between its pages, but which I had until that instant even forgotten I possessed. It was a withered flower, given me by old Gwallah, one of which she said she always carried about her as a charm, there being some tradition connected with Budh concerning the kind of tree upon

which it grew. It was only a flower; but it looked so cold, and lifeless, and sad, that it sent a shudder thrilling through me, as such things sometimes will, recalling to my recollection Lattoo, whom I had strangely forgotten of late, amidst the perpetually changeful scenes and daily incidents of travel.

The morning on which we were to leave Darjeeling, I had gone down to wish a friend good-bye, and was slowly returning homewards, stopping to take breath occasionally, for the path was steep, or turning back to look upon the scene below, which was ever new to me —the houses of the residents crowning the mountain summits, or dotting their slopes, with the peaceful valleys lying at their feet—when some one tapped me on the shoulder.

'How you frightened me, Gwallah!' I exclaimed. 'You shouldn't come suddenly upon one in that way.'

'The mem sahib is going away,' she replied mysteriously, 'and things are not well down there,' pointing in the direction of the distant valley where Lattoo had her home. 'I scold and scold, and call her *susti* and *budmash* (idle and wicked); but I would not lose my girl, mem sahib, for all that. I would not lose my girl,' she added, with faltering voice; and then, continuing almost in a whisper—for the tears were falling fast:

'What good would this poor life be without her? Haven't I seen her grow up before me; ay, and her mother too, ever since she was that high?'

'Well, but what is going to happen to Lattoo?' I inquired.

'The mem sahib hasn't noticed, then, how pale and thin she's been growing of late? She's sickening with a *bīmārī*, of which her mother died, that's all.'

'Nonsense, Gwallah. There isn't much the matter with Lattoo; why, I saw her only two evenings ago.'

'What I say is true, mem sahib. Last night I killed a moorghee, and the blood trickled this way and that way, and then met together *there*'—describing a circle in the soil with her stick—'and that means——'

'Hush!' I said; for I knew what she was going to say. 'What a people you are for omens![1]'

'But there *are* tokens, mem sahib, that never deceive.'

I was in a hurry, and could not talk with her longer; so, as I wished her 'good-bye,' she took from her bosom this withered flower. Her words awakened a painful train of thought, and I must have unconsciously placed the flower within the pages of the book which I happened to have with me.

[1] Fowls are frequently made use of by these superstitious people as mediums to forecast events; no marriage taking place without one being placed in the hands of the bride and another in that of the bridegroom. The heads of the fowls are then cut off by the priest, and the blood is caught in a banana leaf, the omens being gathered from the direction it takes, as well as from the various forms it assumes.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BENGALEE BABOO.

TONGLOO is situated in an exceedingly exposed position, and the predictions we each expressed on retiring last evening to our respective tents, that we were going to have a 'night of it,' are fully realised. It required no ordinary courage to get up this morning when Catoo, our head-man, came shouting outside my tent, '*Mem sahib! mem sahib! Paunch bajā hai*' (it is five o'clock).

I thrust my nose outside the rugs, and felt an incipient chilblain take possession of it on the spot. I had requested Catoo to call me at this hour, he having previously warned me that the only chance of seeing the snowy range of Nepaul—a view of which may be obtained at rather a higher elevation than we ascended yesterday—is at sunrise; and having ordered my dandy-bearers to be in attendance, I am determined to be firm with myself.

Accordingly, after 'chota hazree,'[1] and the thawing influences of a cup of tea, I venture to leave the tent, and observe the white frost lying on the ground unlike anything I ever beheld, the sward being covered with

[1] Which, literally translated, means 'little breakfast.'

a thick coating of ice. Weak nature is sorely tempted to return to the warm, snug tent again, but, disliking to appear vacillating, and fearing also that on the next occasion I might not be able to depend on the presence of my bearers, I pursue my way, feeling really strong-minded for the first time in my whole life.

The heights ascended, however, I am amply rewarded. The greater portion of the Nepaul Range is distinctly visible. Its numerous peaks stand out sheer against the cold grey sky, the only one amongst them to hide himself being Mount Everest, the configuration of whose summit, having seen it from Senshul peeping over the shoulder of the Singaleelah Range, I know too well not to recognise instantly. To describe the colouring of the rocky base of the snow-clad mountains, which forms a perpendicular precipice of many thousand feet below the line of congelation, is impossible in words; I can only convey it to the mind of an artist, by saying it is cobalt, with a little rose-madder, and a great deal of Chinese white.

On each side rise the nearer mountains of Nepaul, steep, rugged, barren; and there is a wonderful opacity in the colouring of the whole—a *chalkiness* one would call it, were it a picture—not easily accounted for, but due, I imagine, to some particular state of the atmosphere, for there is not the slightest haze hanging over them, and the air is crisp and clear. Far more impossible still would it be to describe the immeasurable continuity of snow that surrounds me, embracing fully one-third of the

horizon; but it may be imagined perhaps, when I say that my eye is resting on two hundred miles of eternally snow-capped mountains, stretching from west to east, whilst the sense of isolation is almost oppressive, for throughout all this vast region there is not a sign of human habitation.

The sun has hardly thought of rising yet, so that each object, at this comparatively low elevation, still wears its dark and sombre garb of grey. Standing on feet from which all sensation has long ago departed—the chilblain developing rapidly under these fostering influences!—I wait till my bearers have dragged along some dead branches of the rhododendron, and made a fire, which enables me to endure the cold till the sun is up, when beneath its genial rays the frost soon melts on this upland, where there is no shade. Here I remain several hours, endeavouring to make a sketch of Kinchinjunga and its adjacent peaks; and at ten o'clock I have a solitary picnic, my breakfast being sent up to me.

I was just putting the finishing touches to my sketch, when, looking over my shoulder, I saw travelling towards me, with extraordinary rapidity, across the plains a shadowy army of white clouds, which seemed to come out of the airy distance. These, ascending the heights, soon mingled with the miles of cloud now rising to meet them beneath the mighty snows, and in a few moments everything was enveloped in vapour; and I beat a hasty retreat. Confined the whole live-long day within the narrow limits of our tents—for this mist continued to shut

us in, and everything else out—we strive, but I fear with very ill success, to kill time.

Not only on this day are we fog-bound, but the two following ones also, till the atmosphere gets saturated with moisture, and Nature—that is to say, as much as we can see of it—wears a washed-out, limp, and bedraggled appearance. We lift the 'kernaughts' (walls of the tent), and the cloud bursts in and almost blinds us. Everything one touches is clammy, and one feels oneself a sponge. If we have to stay here under these circumstances much longer, we shall see mosses, fungi, and lichens growing over our portmanteaus, and be able to pursue the study of *cryptogamous* plants before we are up in the morning.

Enter Fanchyng bringing water, looking like a dishevelled Hebe, followed by F——, who has been standing outside smoking, each hair of his moustache and whiskers crowned by its own little globule of moisture, giving him the appearance of a hoary old lichen. I verily believe, if we do not go soon, we shall take root here, and all three of us be metamorphosed into gigantic specimens of moss and fungus, or some other species of moist vegetation.

There is a great uproar in camp, too, consequent upon everybody running into everybody else, and upsetting everybody's goods and chattels, and knocking each other down accidentally. It is fearfully cold besides, and the coolies throw about their arms like windmills, whilst we ourselves keep close under canvas, and crouch together

over the stove. Thank goodness, we are above the range of insect life, so that we can, at any rate, sit in peace in 'mine inn;' and as we converse in a somewhat desultory manner, we feed the hungry stove with the small pieces of wood that have been prepared for it. It is wonderful what a fascination even this has for idle hands, and we almost savagely grudge each other the slight occupation. But we might be worse employed after all, for we all know what that proverbial philosopher and sagacious sage of our childhood, Dr. Watts, says about 'idle hands,' and who the questionable personage is who finds 'work' for them.

Having nothing else to do, I will here introduce another of our party of whom I have not yet spoken, but who is, nevertheless, a very important personage in his way. I allude to Tendook, a native gentleman, the agent of Tcheboo Lama, a man of considerable social status in his own country, in the Rajah's confidence, and much about the Court.

Tendook had long been known to C—— in his official capacity, and on his proposing to accompany us, being himself also, as he said, anxious to visit the 'interior,' C—— fell in at once with the suggestion, knowing he would have great influence over our people, the greater number of whom are natives of the country under his rule. He brings with him a retinue of fifteen men, who swell our numbers, so that altogether, including the little 'sapper corps' of twenty men

I have often mentioned, we have now a camp of ninety souls save one, that one being Fanchyng, who, merely a woman, is denied that spiritual and immortal principle, which the lords of the Indian creation arrogate to themselves as the privilege of man only. I am forgetting, however, that the greater number of our followers are not Mahomedans and Hindoos, who exclude women from entrance into their Elysian Fields, or accord them a very second-rate sort of Paradise at best, but are for the most part Buddhists—a fact of which I am only this moment reminded, in the erection of a little altar of loose stones covered with flags—and Buddhists, like Christians, with a benevolence and generosity far beyond our deserts, concede souls to the fair sex!

Tendook's tent, which is a very imposing one as far as outward appearance goes, being covered with stripes of blue and white cloth embroidered in Thibetan devices, is always pitched at some distance from ours, but whether from motives of respect, or dislike to too great a proximity to the 'Faringhi,' or Christian camp, we have not as yet been able to determine.

Tendook is a good-looking man, rather tall for a Lepcha, his figure 'corpulent and comfortable,' and wonderfully clean for a mountaineer, a concession made only, I imagine, out of consideration for our national prejudices. His dress usually consists of a long robe of maroon-coloured silk, which he sometimes exchanges for one of embroidered amber cloth. His head is adorned

with a small round velvet cap, beneath which dangles a very imposing pigtail, ingeniously lengthened by means of thick-spun silk, which is plaited with the hair, ending in a long tassel, till the whole reaches considerably below the waist, and, keeping time with each movement of his portly figure as he walks along, sways to and fro like the pendulum of a clock. Enough of Tendook for the present.

We have also a true specimen of the 'Bengalee baboo' in our train, a subordinate of C——'s, belonging to a class perhaps the most objectionable of all the natives of this land, whose sleek, stolid face, and large liquid, but passionless eye, and the compromise between the European dress and that of Orientals, which they generally adopt, constitute to my mind a very incongruous and disagreeable picture.

Usually educated at schools in which every branch of education, including the classics and mathematics, considered necessary for English youth is taught, they become conversant in due time with the British authors, Milton and Shakespeare being those for whom they generally affect to have a preference. Gifted with very retentive memories, they store up expressions and sentences which they find in the writings of these their favourite

authors, for the sole purpose of introducing them into ordinary conversation. They also have a way of blending Oriental and English idiom together, which is no less amusing in its results.

An example of their letter-writing, however—of which achievement they are not a little proud—will perhaps give a better idea of their mental characteristics than anything I can say. The substance of their lucubrations is not unfrequently taken, piece by piece, from books, and strung together, with a misapplication of terms that is perfetly astounding, when one remembers that they have been probably educated for years in a school where English formed the basis of their education.

The following is a letter I received from one of these baboos about a year ago :—

Honoured and Reverend Madam,

With the most confounded respect I come before you with the pen, to prostrate myself at your ladyship's footstool as a humble petitioner for your bountiful charities, and long-sufferingness. Your countenance is like the moon when she walks in brightness,[1] wherefore I do not frognosticate defeat—for the 'quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven'—and I commit myself with confidence to your ladyship's gracious recommendations. Dear Madam, I have heard that the Postmaster-Generals a friend of yours, and I implore the appointment of postmaster of ——, lately vacated by Randeem Butterchuckee; for the present menial post of clerk I have for some years been enjoying, has so much attenuated my social position, that the very friends of my breast refuse to know me, and my daughter's nuptials have been hindered thereby. Besides which,

[1] I wonder he didn't say that my eyes were loadstars.

although, as saith the immortal bard, 'sweet are the uses of adversity,' I have often not possessed sufficient filthy lucre to provide my orphans with the grubs necessary to sustain the life.[1] I do not hesitate, your ladyship, for 'truth hath a quiet breast,' to caricature the late *functionary* holding the appointment I *hunger* for, as a pusillanimous donkey; but *humanum est errare*, and I trust, if I am so happy to succeed him, that by enlarging my phylacteries and a punctuality to business and small profits—'for the golden mind stoops not to show of dross'—I shall merit the malevolent benefaction not only of the nobility and 'tocracy, but of the general public. But as 'brevity is the soul of wit,' I will now withdraw, begging your reverend ladyship will lay this humble contrition before his excellency, the gentlemans at the top of the post-office. And as I am going to become Christān, please, ladyship, lend me fifty rupee only, and keep my being Christān *snug* (secret); and your petitioner will ever pray that the fatness of heaven may descend upon your head, and the waves of Britannia shall always rule your

Devoted servant and slave,

RAM GHOSE MUCKERJEE.

They are wonderfully quick in picking up 'slang' expressions, which they use on all occasions, pathetic or otherwise. A baboo in the employment of the Public Works Department came to me one day with rueful countenance and tear-dimmed eye—for they are a very filial people, in spite of everything—to announce the fact that the long-dreaded hour had arrived, and that on that very morning, just at half-past five o'clock, the much-respected *Bībī*, his maternal grandmother, had '*turned*

[1] Not referring, as I imagine, to a Diet of Worms, but to that which, in the polite language of modern slang, is sometimes adopted for the old and vulgar term *food*.

up her toes to the daisies!' They are also much addicted to introducing Latin into their letters and conversation, and whilst quoting their favourite Shakespeare, not unfrequently utterly pervert his meaning. Thus a subordinate of F——'s, writing on one occasion to condole with him on my being obliged to return to England in consequence of ill-health, began in this wise :—

'All the world's a stage' (by which I suppose he meant perpetually moving on, like a stage coach). 'Nothing, Sir, can really be said to be in a state of quo' (*in statu quo*); and finished up with the very consoling and novel information that 'All flesh is grash, and hastening to the tombs.'

The baboo we have with us is no exception to his class. If you remark on the beauty of the scenery around, he will quote from some poet, and tell you that 'To look on noble things makes noble,' or something of that kind. On the march he may be seen wending his way along perfectly alone, taking no notice either of things animate or things inanimate. A smile never by any chance lights up his features; densest fog and merriest sunshine affect him alike, and he looks so utterly wretched and miserable, with such a settled and hopeless melancholy written in every line of his face, that F—— declares it makes him feel inclined to cut his *own* throat even to look at him.

We all long for the fog to clear and enable us to journey on again; our idle folk meanwhile sit gambling round their fires, or stand about in knots talk-

ing. It is amusing to watch Fanchyng amongst a group of Bhootias and Lepchas, or more frequently with the kitmutgars, and listen now to her merry ringing laugh, now to her shrill angry tones as something is said which annoys her. Fanchyng was not beautiful, as I have said, but she was a bright and bonny lass, possessing, through the combined influence of art and keen mountain breezes, the rosiest of cheeks, and the kitmutgars and plainsmen liked well enough to talk to her; but woe to him who spoke in a too familiar tone, or touched her with but the tip of his finger. As a Bhootia, she had twice their muscle and physique, and I would not have answered for the consequences.

Small things are an event to us whilst fog-bound here, and a chowkeydar arriving from Darjeeling this morning with bread and other small things produced quite a sensation. It is true that the bread is more than a week old; but having been condemned to eat hard sea biscuit for three days, we regard it as an immense luxury.

It was here that C—— expected to be met by the three agents from the Court of Nepaul; but as they make no sign, he sent a messenger yesterday with a letter, reminding them of the object of his visit, and acquainting them with the fact of his actual arrival. Nothing came of it, however, and he was informed long after that they had insolently said they desired no communication with the English Government either personally or by letter. So much for our friendly relations with Nepaul!

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE ENCAMP IN A PINE FOREST.

THE fog having cleared the third morning after our arrival at Mount Tongloo, we struck tents and started on our way. Since that time a week has passed, and we have been marching regularly from twelve to fifteen miles each day. However sharp the frosts may be at night, the sun, when he deigns to shine, makes the day pleasantly warm. Journeying on in cheery companionship, we are 'merrier than marriage bells,' hardly heeding the flow of time, like children, conscious only of the happy present, with neither past to regret, nor future to dread; life's sorrows coming to us hushed, or not at all.

There is unquestionably a charm quite unique in travelling in these mountains, and a freedom inconceivable. There is no registering of one's effects, and agonising dread of mislaying the *reçu de baggage,* as in travelling on the Continent. There are no Custom-house officials to read in your face the undeniable fact that, deep-hidden in a mysterious, far-concealed pocket, there lie some dozen pairs of light kid gloves, or packets of cigars, which in a weak moment you have undertaken to pass for your hus-

band. We are haunted by no dread, as in England, every time the train draws up to a station, that at this very identical moment somebody may be standing at the door of the luggage-van, and coolly laying claim to your particular belongings.

No solemn garden parties or funereal dinners, no weary conventionalities of society, follow us here. We are children of nature. Hungry and we eat, weary and we lay us down and sleep. All kinds of pleasant incidents occur on the way, and the fatigue and rough bits of road, which, as F—— expresses it, are 'bone-wrenching' to climb, the frequent small vexations, the thousand-and-one things that will not run smoothly, are all alike forgiven and forgotten in this pure and exhilarating air; and in the lonely heart of nature, one's mind, somehow, becomes more open to tender and innocent enjoyment. The people of our camp, too, are in such an uncontrollable state of hilarity, that it is useless trying to curb them; and Nautch-wallah, going on in advance of us, indulges, every now and then, in a sort of Highland fling.

I am getting used to the battering and shaking which I hourly experience in my dandy, and my muscles are getting used to the straining. We are all becoming accustomed to our canvas homes: we do not so persistently run against the tent-poles, or risk decapitating ourselves every time we go in or out; we are learning to double up, and be compressible; we no longer knock our shins against legs of tables and other tent furniture. The

gentlemen at last know how to dispose of their feet and legs; and we are taking so marvellously to our Arab life, notwithstanding everything, that we begin to believe we must be direct descendants of Ishmael.

We are also getting used to the candles, as they hang from our tent-poles, guttering down all night upon our hats, or any other articles of attire that may happen to be beneath; but I cannot say that I am as yet quite used to having all about my clothes black currant jelly, a pot of which C—— benevolently gave me for a sore throat. This pot first tumbled into my open portmanteau, without my knowledge or consent, and then, in the hurry of striking tents this morning, got packed up in it, and, having been tossed about violently all day on its way hither, has saturated everything with its sticky sweetness. Neither do I *as a rule* use by way of dentifrice the arsenical powder with which F—— embalms his ornithological specimens, and which Fanchyng presented to me one morning, instead of a bottle of fragrant Odonto.

F—— is the only one of our trio who takes any rest. C——, not contented with his daily march, often sets off, on arrival at camp, for another walk, or, surrounded by despatch-boxes, sits writing for hours, having brought some of his office work with him. For myself, I sketch madly everything I see. Living day by day, and hour by hour, with the Great Mother, one acquires an affinity with her, and gets to find out her secrets. How one realises *grey* in everything, grey not only in retiring

portions, and in shade, but grey *sunlight* even, grey predominating everywhere; and I often recall to mind the works of that simple and truthful lover of nature, David Cox, with his grey daylight, and warm buff shadows. How one comprehends at last what artists mysteriously call the 'regular irregular,' and 'the lost and the found,' which perhaps mark the difference between the works of artists and amateurs, more than aught else. Becoming a pupil in this great school of Nature, one finds that her palette is furnished with very little positive colour, and that she uses it in the half-tones only; and one arrives at length at the appalling and humiliating conclusion, that her trees are *not* a combination of verdigris and boiled spinach, as one would imagine from the study of the works of some of the pre-Raphaelites, and that, therefore, many of one's own previous art efforts must be a gigantic failure!

What glorious views we passed to-day, what deep valleys and blue mountains! In one place, through a rent in the rock, Kinchinjunga was seen standing alone in all the glory of its glittering sheen, beneath which were rugged hills in every exquisite shade of rose, and violet, and purple. Scattered here and there upon them were tall and ragged pines, permitted by the elements, one would imagine, to have anything but a peaceful life of it, so eccentric was their growth, so black and seared, and, above all, so singularly bare of foliage.

Following a sheep track a great part of the way, we reached a rudely constructed hut, sheltered beneath

rhododendron trees, which we conjectured must belong to a Nepaulese shepherd, grazing his flocks in more fertile pastures below; for, at this time of the year, the herbage at these elevations is scanty and dry. A large dog guarding the hut flew out at us, and barked violently, indignantly refusing to be propitiated by a bone which one of the baggage coolies threw to him. Nor did he seem inclined to let us alone, until he had followed us to a safe distance, when, with a parting growl, he permitted us to pursue our journey unmolested.

Our march to-day was an unusually exhausting one. The higher we ascend the more difficult and uneven becomes our path, which sometimes takes us close to fearful gulfs, into which one false step on the part of my dandy-wallahs must inevitably precipitate me. At such times and places my faithful bearers, in their simple child-like way, bade me 'have no fear;' and when the path led over very dangerous places, Hatti, proud of his great strength, would insist on being one to carry me. Tendook and I, too, have become already great allies, and he usually accompanies me, directing their steps, walking by my side, in stately and dignified silence, ready to render unobtrusive help when necessary; whilst Nautch-wallah, when not on duty, beguiles the way, as usual, by dancing more deliriously than any Satyr, and footing it in a manner that would have astonished even Pan himself; but Hatti walks by my side, when similarly disengaged, as if he were my champion.

I have often spoken of the amiable bearing of the Lepchas not only towards Europeans, but towards each other. The Bhootias, however, and Nepaulese, some of whom are amongst C——'s and Tendook's retinue, frequently engage in small feuds, and form, in truth, two factions, with whom it is sometimes war almost to the knife. The Bhootias, as the stronger party, generally

have it all their own way, claiming pre-eminence as their right, whilst the peaceful Lepchas, who are not prone to wax valiant in fight, yield to them naturally, as they would do to everybody. Not so the Nepaulese, who do so with but ill grace. There is honour amongst thieves, we are told, and there are rules of precedence even amongst these semi-barbarians. On arrival at camping-ground this evening, we were favoured with an instance of it. Some of the baggage coolies, who had done their share of work, in hauling wood, fetching

water, clearing ground, &c., having established themselves in groups in their respective quarters, were already cooking their evening meal; whilst Hatti and Nautch-wallah, who head the Bhootia faction, were still occupied in the pitching of our tents. On retiring to their own camping ground, after finishing their work, they found that the Nepaulese had taken advantage of their absence by choosing the most comfortable and convenient places for their own bivouac. Hereupon a war arose, and they fell upon each other, like rooks fighting for a bough, some of the Bhootias hurling the cooking pans of the Nepaulese and their contents into the very air. Attracted by the noise, F—— went to see what it was all about, and arriving just as the battle was won, found Hatti removing the belongings of the vanquished Nepaulese from the disputed ground; whilst Nautch-wallah, somewhat exhausted by his exertions, was calmly sitting on the recumbent form of Tatters, one of the offending party. At which proceeding F—— remonstrated, insisting on Nautch-wallah's finding some other seat.

'Never mind him, Sahib,' replied Nautch-wallah; 'him all right!' as the poor crushed fellow rose to his feet, and tried to shake himself into shape again. 'Him pugla (foolish); I give rice, and make all right again.'

I have frequently observed, on reaching camp, that the gentle Lepchas squat down upon the ground, and wait patiently till the feudal parties have taken up their several positions, and then quietly put up with whatever

places may be left, the consequence being that they are but too often left out in the cold.

The spots considered most advantageous for bivouacking are those beneath the shelter of thick bushes, or against large boulders or overhanging rocks, which form a background. Stakes of about four or five feet long are then driven into the ground and covered with a striped dhurrie, or scarf, which they wear over their shoulders on the march; those who do not possess articles of the kind, forming little enclosures of boughs.

We were just leaving our own to proceed to the dining tent, when the oppressed Tatters presented himself before us, holding up the fragments of the earthen pot in which his rice had been cooking, and which Hatti had broken, the tears coursing down his smoke-begrimed face, creating little meanderings, like the Delta of the Nile. It was evidently a great loss to him, and one he could not make good. But F—— summoned Catoo, the deficiency was soon supplied, and the poor fellow retired to his lair, looking as happy as a child.

These hill tribes certainly suffer from chronic hydrophobia, and except when exposed to an involuntary shower-bath from a heavy down-pour of rain, are seldom acquainted with the cleansing element. What a blessing it is that Nature, meeting the exigéncies of the case, causes it to rain so heavily in these mountain regions!

We are now encamped in a pine forest, and the air is filled with resinous odours, our footsteps falling noise-

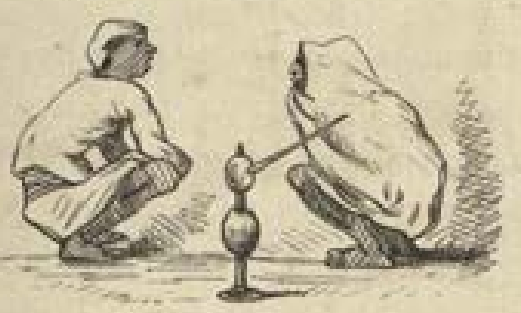
lessly over a soft carpet spread by the 'autumnal sheddings of countless years.' As evening wears on, it is beautiful to watch the camp-fires gleaming through the tall straight stems, as the wind, like giant bellows, blows the flames about fitfully, and makes music amongst their branches.

The general silence already indicates that our tired people have eaten their meal and are at rest; and the sound of a gently gurgling 'hubble-bubble,' filled with a

compound of tobacco, spices, sugar, and opium, proceeding from within the cooking tent, and smoked by some contemplative Moslem, shows that he too has given himself up, body and soul, to the calm enjoyment of the hour; whilst we ourselves, reclining by the waning camp-fire, too lazy to talk, watch the wood split and fall in and then burn up again with a sudden crackle and splutter.

It is amusing to see the plainsmen—many of whom we have in our camp—smoke their evening 'hookah.' Squatting down upon their heels, they remain perfectly silent, too thoroughly absorbed in that delightful exercise to be conversational, or to take notice of anything that is going on around them. No sooner, however, have they exhausted its contents than, wrapping themselves tightly in their chuddahs, they are quite ready to talk to a brother about the probable state of the rice crops, or of the last arrival of pilgrims from Mecca.

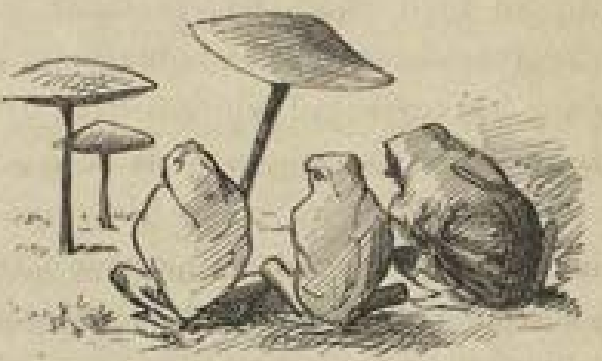
More singular and amusing still is it to see them on a showery day, in the plains where their umbrellas are made of bamboo, and do not shut, and where they may be seen squatting, with these useful articles—which are



fitted with spikes at the bottom of the handles for the purpose—stuck into the ground over or near them. At such times they look from a little distance precisely like frogs sitting beneath a species of fungus, familiarly known as 'toad-stools.'

We are now at an elevation of eleven thousand feet, and, the cold growing intense as evening wears on, I

retire within my tent, whilst F——, smoking, keeps vigil with the moon. Reclining within the open doorway, I look out upon an exquisite framed picture of pine forest, the tall straight trunks casting long elf-like shadows, through which is seen one noble glittering spire of snow, in solitary grandeur; and I recall the events of the day, and think with a shudder of the precipices we have



passed, and the unknown dangers we have escaped, and how near we may have been to that mysterious life beyond, which awaits us all sooner or later, when the slender thread which binds us here will be loosed to let us free; a time that almost comes to us in the vicissitude of each day's travel, and would surely do so but for some restraining hand to hold us up.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PINES.

'Ye hills! ye seem the great earth's aspirations,
The heavings of her full heart toward the skies.'

To-DAY being Sunday, we anchor here to give our tired men a day's rest. A short service in the dining-tent—F—— reading the prayers, and C—— the lessons and psalms for the day—carries us away in thought from these scenes to those of home. It is a sweet calm day, the heavens above so blue and all around so fair. Plenty of *sermons* find we in this grand volume of Nature.

A little below our encampment, between wooded heights, we again catch sight of an angle of the plains, simmering in the noon-day sun, which cooks them slowly and tenderly at this season of the year, but which two or three months hence will grill them like a monster salamander, rob them of the exquisite emerald green they now wear, and 'do them brown' in no time, till they become almost as arid and barren as the desert of

Sahara. When striking straight down, it will pierce the brain like a red-hot poker, and those who live there will breathe flames, for the wind blowing in parching tornadoes, as from the mouth of an oven, will puff away its fiery blasts from 'morn till *stewy* eve.' 'A hot, tremulous haze, like poisoned vapour, will exhale from the earth; a broad zone of 'prickly heat' will encircle the waists of its dwellers like a metallic brush, thickly set with finest needle-points; and mosquitoes will make their life a burden.

Later in the afternoon we walk across to an adjacent mountain, whence we hope to gain a view of a military fort belonging to the Goorkhas, the dominant race in Nepaul. Far, far down in green hollows, here and there lie little sleepy huts, folded snugly in the bosom of the mountains, and *tucked* in, as it were, with neat enclosures of sugar-cane, which surround them like a wall.

Reaching camp just as the sun is setting, we pass Tendook's tent, where he and Narboo, the interpreter, are sitting within the doorway, like Abraham and Isaac, or some other of the Patriarchs one reads of in the Bible; and F—— and C—— now leave me, to prolong their walk in another direction, and I, sitting over the camp-fire, feel not unhappy alone.

There is a strange hush in our usually busy hive, a kind of Sabbath stillness; and it is on evenings like the present, when the azure is giving place to mellow saffron

lights, as the sun sinks deeper below the horizon, that the forecast steals through the mind, that we too must one day sink to rest, and that the chastened and mellow light of one's own life's evening will be but an earnest and harbinger of the glory that is to follow on the morrow. When later still all colour fades, and these transcendent and eternal hills, with their look of indomitable energy and irresistible force, stand out stately and solemn in the subdued light, I love to muse upon them best.

Two years ago I was standing beneath the all but immortal pyramids of Gizeh; and how my spirit stirred within me, as my eye rested upon that, which stretching down a long vista of chequered vicissitude, carried me back in thought to remote antiquity, and connected the dead past with the living present. Yet, great as are those mighty monuments, they had a genesis. Four thousand years ago they were raised block by block, and are but the handiwork of man, himself the handiwork of God; but these lordly and eternal snows, on which no human foot has ever trodden,[1] were laid flake by flake

[1] No one has hitherto been able to ascend beyond 22,000 feet.

by the Almighty architect. Before history was, they were; and sitting here wrapped in their shadow, and encompassed by their grand and solemn silence, I feel in the living presence of the Infinite.

The following morning, rising at peep of day, we grope our way outside. The eastern sky is just tinged with the first faint glow of morning; all else is dim and indistinct. At these altitudes I have observed a kind of warm translucent light preceding sunrise, a slight forecast or herald of the approach of day. Walking some little distance over the crisp white sward, and threading our way between the pine-trees, we reach the brow of the hill, and watch this light die out, when all becomes pale and cold. Then suddenly a brilliant streak bursts over the horizon, the sun rapidly ascends, and in a few minutes the sky is bathed in a flood of rose and purple, and, like an illuminated manuscript, bears glorious witness to the resurrection, in the awakening day. Turning westwards, the snowy peaks, covered with a pink mist, look vague and dreamy still; whilst the lower mountains in the middle distance are greenish black, their summits bristling with a *chevaux-de-frise* of leafless pines, standing out boldly against the soft grey of the eastern peaks, which seem literally melting into ether.

But although the sun had indeed risen to *us*, in the valleys darkness reigned—a darkness like that of an eclipse—with the exception of one little spot, where that impartial benefactor that shines upon the 'evil and the

good,' the rich and poor alike, glinting sideways through a mountain cleft, was lighting up a lonely hut, which looked like a mere bee-hive from this distance, and shedding a shower of golden warmth over the little patches of cultivation surrounding it, which had been watered by the gentle dews of night; and methought how much this slight suggestion of habitation increased the desolation of all around.

Returning to our tent, we steal silently upon the cook, who, to economise time probably, is performing the double operation of smoking his 'hubble-bubble,' and preparing *chota hazree*; and we become eye-witnesses of the *cool* manner in which the matutinal toast is made. This is how it was accomplished; and I need scarcely say

that we gratefully and uncomplainingly return to our biscuit for the future.

On this day's march we make a further ascent of a thousand feet, and the pine-trees begin not only to be less abundant, but to bear unmistakable marks of the rough blasts to which they are exposed at some seasons of the year. Indeed, at this elevation they are so eccentrically formed, so knock-kneed and hump-backed, that one cannot help fancying that mother Nature must have nursed them badly in their infancy, for their growth seems to have been a series of spasmodic and convulsive efforts, rather than the 'gentle process of natural development.' Not only are their limbs twisted and gnarled, but their joints are knobby, like those of rheumatic old men ; and they somehow wear a doomed and scared look, but, nevertheless, one that is quite in keeping with their surroundings.

All are covered with moss and lichen,—moss of that hardy kind which grows in thick velvety bosses, varying in hue from yellow to the deepest, richest brown, whilst in other places it is vivid green. In the dim labyrinth of these pine-woods no sound greets us, for it is tuneless of the songs of birds, there being no fowls of the air to make their nests and 'sing among the branches.' Nothing is heard but the wailing of the wind, which moans with an unutterable sadness. Wending our way steadily onwards through these grand and ancient forests, we come upon exquisite formations of

cold grey rock, which time has painted with lichen stains, and the weather pitted with deep lines and hollows, just as the faces of the old get marred and wrinkled.

Throughout the forest there is an undergrowth of the scarlet berbery, a kind similar to that which grows in England, but much smaller, and with leaves so red that, by contrast with the sombre colouring of all around, they seem to burn like live coals; but the bracken-fronds at this elevation look frost-seared and melancholy. With their amber stems well-nigh severed by the wintry blasts, they hang their heads, and nestle together in sorry, comfortless companionship, as if to keep each other warm, making one shiver even to look at them, as we brush our way along.

Now and then, through the pine stems, bright glimpses of the snows are seen, wonderfully lustrous in their fresh powdering of crystal. How they flash and quiver! each shining prominency casting its deep blue shadow in cleft and fissure.

Here and there we meet with patriarchal pines, and the higher we ascend the more frequently we do so. These, though destitute of foliage, are covered with a garment of lichen, in long, long, hoary tufts of greenish grey, for all the world like old men's beards, which only add to their old and weird appearance, as they struggle for dear life a little longer. Lonely and sad and very weary, they seem but to be waiting *their* turn to be laid low, their skeleton arms upraised in mute appeal to

heaven, as if uttering 'how long;' whilst others seem to have been arrested in the very act by death, and to have stiffened then and there. Oh! how I love these haggard, lonely pines.

To my mind there is something inexpressibly touching in the sight of these once noble trees, upon which 'Ichabod' is now written. They look so terribly human that one cannot help feeling a kind of pity for them. I have used the word 'noble,' not so much to express their stature, as—still regarding them as almost sentient things—to describe their exalted nature, typifying as they do such stern endurance, never bending to the blast, but only lifting their branches like giant arms in silent protest, and, in their resistance, forming a striking contrast to the rhododendrons, their companions in distress, which, succumbing to the force of wind and weather, and yielding to the pressure, rest their strong sturdy trunks and branches horizontally on the very ground, being at this altitude most singular-looking trees.

Although I observed rhododendrons in every stage of existence as we came along, from the tiny nursling, with its four leaflets, just emerging from the soil, to the vigorous and lusty shrub, I have not seen a young pine, and I cannot help wondering with painful interest, how the dying and the dead are replaced. There was no absence of cones, for we noticed them lying in all directions in the pine-forest below, but the seeds do not appear to germinate. Is there a *cycle* in the growth of trees?

Passing many days amongst these majestic pines, one feels sad to think they are the last of their generation, and that their race must soon become extinct. One would be almost inclined to imagine, from the total absence of successors—and their keen resemblance to humanity fosters the illusion—that the brave weather-beaten old fellows, having themselves withstood so many centuries of wind and frost, had grown tired of resistance, and, despairing of things becoming more comfortable and jolly in years to come, had benevolently arrived at the determination not to perpetuate their species.

On reaching camp I mentioned this fact to C——, who had been in advance of us all day, and he told me that he too had made the same observation as he came along, and had decided to communicate it to the 'Forest Department' immediately on his return, for without the timely intervention of man these grand primeval forests will one day be extinct.

CHAPTER XXV.

'VOYAGES IN THE AIR.'

It is surprising how soon one falls into that praiseworthy habit, commended by our forefathers, of rising early, when one is living an out-of-doors life. I now find it as difficult to remain within my tent after the first streak of dawn has appeared, as it would be at home to get up before the sun is high in the heavens. Quitting the tent at the usual hour, and observing signs of life in the blackened embers of a deserted camp-fire, I shout for Catoo to rekindle it. There is scarcely sufficient light yet to enable him to perform even this slight process; but a cup of tea is soon the result, and the camp, thus aroused, is all astir. Summoning my bearers, I start on the march before the sun has done much more than tip the pine-tops with his gilding.

In vain I urged F—— to accompany me. He is not so enthusiastic an artist as I am, and in these solitary excursions—for I generally precede the rest—I have fortunately no sense of loneliness. I have, besides, plenty of attendants with me, being accompanied not only by Fanchyng and my dandy-bearers, but by two of

C——'s chuprassees also, and a chowkeydar by way of body-guard! Tendook also invariably offers his services as an especial guard, so that I am well protected, were protection necessary. I have learnt by experience that the only time to be certain of absence of cloud is before noon, and we are passing through a country not one of whose beauties would I lose. I hope, moreover, to make a sketch to-day, and that is another inducement to struggle on through present discomfort. But *what* an effort it was to leave the warm snug tent, after having re-entered it, and go on my way with frozen hands and fingers!

I creep along below the crest of an eastern mountain, which effectually shuts out the sun. Nature wears an unutterably cold aspect, and although the ground is speckled everywhere with the brambles of the scarlet berberry and the *Pyrus Americana*, gemmed with its red berries, all is alike colourless from hoar frost. But as the sun rises higher, it peeps over the ridge of the mountain, and Hatti exclaims in Hindustanee—with a pathos very touching, when I look around me, and observe the scanty covering of some of the poorest of my attendants—'Oh, mem sahib! here comes the poor man's clothing!' and rapidly ascending, it soon sheds warmth and colour upon everything, and all is joy and gladness. The pine-twigs, bending under their weight of dissolving icicles, rain upon us as we pass, and the dew-drops, sparkling in the lichen cups, melt beneath its rays. How well I recollect,

when I was a small child and believed heart and soul in fairies, thinking that these tiny cups were filled each night for them to drink from!

Having descended considerably the last hour, we come upon pines that do not bear such marks of violence. These are not only covered with tufts of pendulous lichen, but with hanging moss of richest green, draping each branch fully half a yard in length, resembling *chenille* that has been first knitted, and then unravelled. It is very curious to observe the wonderful variety of these parasites, which differ so completely at each altitude.

On the march, one of my bearers, a dapper little Lepcha named Joogoo, met with a number of roots of the lily-of-the-valley, which he dug up for me, and which I intend taking home, to propagate if possible as a souvenir. He also gathered from the trees for his own refection and delectation a species of moist fungus, which is not only wholesome but they tell me exceedingly good to eat. This little man knows the name, not only of every mountain, but of each herb by the wayside also, and sometimes gives me quite a little history of them as I go along, describing their qualities and peculiarities. It is unfortunate that, coming at this season of the year, we should miss so many of the Alpine flowers, as well as fruit, upon which the Lepchas can almost wholly subsist.

Halting soon, I unfold my easel and make a sketch of Junnoo; and in three hours' time F—— and the 'burra sahib,' as they all call C——, come scrambling

down the mountain side, followed by the 'tiffin coolie.' We make a point of keeping this individual closely in our wake, panic seizing us the very instant we lose sight of him; for hungry as we always are in this keen and bracing mountain air, his presence acts as a kind of counter irritant, and we are able to survive its pangs all the longer, from the knowledge that they may be assuaged at any moment. Our luncheons are 'movable feasts,' not only as to place, but time. Noon, however, is the hour at which we endeavour to halt for refection, always supposing that we are fortunate enough to find a stream of water near us. The fire is soon lighted, and the frying-pan—the favourite cooking utensil for the march—spluttering away with its savoury contents. The repast, provided by C—— in the plenitude of his hospitality, generally consists of fried ham, moorghee, or pheasant (the latter almost daily shot on the road), varied by hermetically-sealed provisions, tea or chocolate completing the *menu*. Whilst we partake of our rustic meal, the people of our camp come straggling up; now pausing to rest, or to gather herbs to flavour their simple food at the end of the day's march, now toiling on again—but always merry.

Gathering up the fragments and pursuing our journey, we meet three very Chinese-looking men leading a flock of little fluffy sheep, evidently provided by Nature with coats to suit the exigencies of the climate. All are muzzled to prevent their grazing by the way, and getting

poisoned by the aconite plant that is growing everywhere amongst the herbage. The ponies, too, those *useless* animals—for the gentlemen were long ago obliged to relinquish them in these pathless steeps, and take permanently to their legs and alpenstocks—were similarly muzzled this morning before starting, the banks being full of it. The aconite is said to be of so deadly a nature that, if the naked feet of the natives only press its succulent leaves, they frequently swell to such an extent as to prevent them from walking. Tendook also informs me that the natives who collect its roots for sale have sometimes been known to die on their way back to Darjeeling, their flesh coming in contact with it through the open baskets in which it is conveyed; and I observe that the baggage coolies, who do not wear mocassins, pick their way carefully, so as to avoid treading on it.

We pass now through a narrow gorge, and our progress is rendered exceedingly difficult by the number of pine-trees which lie across it, precipitated from the heights. As we leave these behind, our pathway leads us up the almost dry bed of a watercourse. It is said that flies walk up glass, by means of a vacuum they create in the foot, and I should think that F—— and C—— must wish devoutly that Nature had provided them likewise with similar arrangements; for the bed of a watercourse is not such pleasant scrambling as could be desired, either for ourselves or ponies, the latter particularly, which appear to find their four legs too many for them, not to

say altogether an encumbrance, for they cannot climb over stones nearly as well as we bipeds do. It is a perfect marvel how the coolies manage to climb these places with their heavy loads without falling—a thing they do not always succeed in accomplishing, for a heavy thud, and a bump, followed by a chorus of laughter from those above and below, all announce the fact that some poor unhappy wight, having lost his balance, is sliding down the steep incline. The more prudent and wary, however, do not trust themselves to its slippery channel, but scramble over the boulders. It is a greater marvel still how the dandy-wallahs manage to carry me; and perhaps the greatest of all is, how I contrive to keep in my dandy. Occasionally I am knocked against a sharp piece of rock, and nearly turned over, then by another knock in a different direction am as quickly knocked in again; but I seldom utter any word of complaint beyond *Khabardar!* (Take care!), and my poor men are cheerful and patient under all difficulties. Groans and grunts do escape them sometimes, but even these are relieved by scraps of song, with which, bidding defiance to every law of harmony, they endeavour to beguile the tedium of the way. These wild banshee strains seem quite in keeping with the scenery through which we are travelling.

Reaching the summit of the Singaleelah range, at an elevation of 12,000 feet, we pass frozen streamlets, and get beyond the region not only of pines, but of ferns also, even of the more hardy species, and are fast losing sight

of our little friend the *immortelle.* This little snow-white flower, familiar to all Alpine travellers, grows on some of the loftiest mountains of the Tyrol, and is called by the guides, *Edelweiss* (Noble white). It grows, there as here, beyond the limits of vegetation, with the exception of that of small herbaceous plants. Having travelled in its presence so long a time, we quite miss its soft white tufts; but the deadly and unwholesome aconite takes its place, and grows more abundantly at each step as we ascend.

The sky is intensely blue, and the air so intoxicating in its freshness, that the very tea we had for breakfast on the way seems to have got into our heads, and so exhilarating is the atmosphere that one's very heart seems to throb as with new life. It is sweet to breathe and live—the mere fact of existence in itself being a delight; and on F——remarking, *sotto voce,* that Nautch-wallah appears to be unnecessarily attentive to Fanchyng—insisting on carrying her bundle for her, and making himself agreeable in other small ways—I ask him how it is possible to *help* falling head over heels in love with everything and everybody, even with oneself, *faute de mieux.* I verily believe that a solo from a jackal, in such moments of extreme gladness, would sound 'plaintive, soothing, and not unmusical.'

From this ridge we seem literally to look down upon the clouds, and to be making 'voyages in the air.' Thick layers of vapour, many miles in extent, float immediately

below us, immersing the valleys in sombre shade, whilst we above them are in brilliant sunshine. It is beautiful to watch *this* wreathing vapour curve, and heave, and break up into different forms, changing each moment as it travels onwards, huge billows rolling over and over, uplifted as though by the agency of some mighty hand. Sometimes we look down as upon snow-capped mountains, sometimes into cavernous recesses, at others upon calm lakes embosomed in hills, but far more frequently upon a troubled sea. Then all dissolves, and one seems to be gazing upon some world of enchantment, as the broken heaps of cloud-rift roll onwards out of sight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MOONLIGHT ADVENTURE.

EARLY evening found us encamping on the summit of another mountain of this range; and the scenery, which grows more grand and savage in its character the higher we ascend, is finer than that which we have seen from any of our previous encampments.

As we had made a quicker march than usual, notwithstanding our climb, it was still broad day when we arrived at the place chosen for us by our corps of sappers, and the sun still shone above the mountain peaks. But the baggage-coolies had not kept up so well with us; and we had, consequently, to wait till the exciting process of tent-pitching was accomplished. Our swarthy *chef de cuisine*, however, had arrived, and was already crouching over his stew-pans, peering anxiously into them occasionally, like a wizard engaged in the preparation of some unholy philter or mystic spell. Meanwhile, after a short rest, F—— and I start for a walk along the ridge of the plateau on which our camp is situated. Taking coolies with us, to cut down any bushes which might be found to impede our progress, we soon enter a belt of rhododendron trees, small and stunted here, from their exposed

position. Brushing our way through them for about a hundred yards or so, and then emerging, we find immediately in front of us a broad piece of rock, which shuts out the view completely; but climbing it, we look down upon a deep and silent valley, and almost *over* the rocky mountains, which have hitherto hidden some thousands of feet of the base of the perpetually snow-clad range. The snows, therefore, from this point, presented an un-

usually superb *coup d'œil*, and I instantly conceived the idea of a moonlight picture, or at any rate a rough memorandum of one. Even half an hour's work would, I knew, impress the subject more deeply on my memory for working out at leisure.

Once more I did my utmost to arouse a little dormant enthusiasm in F——, to induce him to accompany me again to this spot when the moon should be

up; but, as usual, all eloquence was unavailing. He obstinately refused to undertake anything more enterprising than a cigar after dinner over the camp fire, and then, as he expressed it, to 'turn in.' But I make a small mental resolve, nevertheless, which I take care to keep to myself, not even confiding in Fanchyng, who I felt sure would be unable to keep a secret; and by the time we return to camp, tents are ready for our reception, and dinner is announced.

When we left the dining tent to retire to our own at ten o'clock, the sky was beautifully clear. It seemed not night—for the moon was at the full—but a purer and more 'divine prolongation' of the day. So clear was it that we could plainly see each bit of jutting rock, and the shadow it cast upon the most distant peak, whilst the glaciers looked spectral in the silent heavens; the tremendous precipice of Pundeem, with its dark castellated walls, standing out majestically against the vast glacial valley of Kinchinjunga. It was a sight I can never forget—that dazzling pile, upon the loftiest peak of which a faint shade of rose still lingered, as though it was dreaming of the morrow's sunrise. So glorious was it altogether that it makes me unhappy to think I cannot find words to express the beauty, the majesty, and the poetry of it; but such scenes are an expression in themselves, and are more capable of being felt than spoken. I cannot describe it; but the waste of snows stretching away as far as eye could reach, their utter loneliness, the

perfect stillness that reigned everywhere, and the desolation they presented, impressed me with a deep sense of terrible repose.

The pines, too, only added to the general desolation, for they were lying on the ground in every attitude of wild confusion. Those which had yielded to the force of the storm-king, blanched by time, lay like human bodies thrown together in a heap, as on a battle-field. Some, fallen across huge masses of rock, remained poised one upon another like mammoth skeletons, in positions where they fell—who shall say how many centuries ago?—whilst others again, left standing where they died, were now stiff and stark, and ghastly to look upon, in the ghostly moonlight. We are at an elevation now where they seem to have ceased to live, for none have the faintest vestige of foliage.

At half-past ten o'clock, peeping forth from my tent, the moon was still shining brilliantly, but clouds that almost appeared to touch me were scurrying past. The snows too were veiled by a semi-transparent mist which half hid them, so that, my ardour somewhat abating, I subsided beneath the canvas, and sat on the foot of my little camp bed reading. At length extinguishing the light, I threw myself down without undressing, and was soon fast asleep, and the moonlight and the snows and my hoped-for picture were alike forgotten. But the evening's impressions must have been strong upon me still, causing my sleep to be uneasy and intermittent, for

two hours later I awoke, and a little moonbeam was shining on my bed through a crack in the canvas. This induced me to get up to see how all was looking outside.

Noiselessly untying the flaps which enclosed the entrance, I crept out. The moon was shining so brightly that I could have read the smallest print by its aid, and the snows were positively dazzling. The sky was of that exquisite violet blue, or rather, what I think describes it better, *sapphire*, which one sees on clear moonlight nights in Italy—that land so favoured by heaven with tender beauteous skies.

Now I have no wish to make myself out to be a heroine, being on the contrary the veriest coward; never, *entre nous*, having yet been able to go into a dark room alone, or pass an open doorway at night, without seeing faces peering at me out of the darkness; but somehow I can go through a great deal for a picture.

It was the thought of a moment; I never dreamt of possibilities. Once more groping my way under the 'kernaughts,' I felt for my block and chalks, which I had prepared in readiness early in the evening, knowing that I could not use colours on this occasion, and throwing a cloak over my shoulders and a fur hood over my head, I sallied forth, closing the aperture as well as I could from the outside, and then pausing, held my breath to listen whether F—— was stirring; but no! he still breathed heavily. Passing C——'s tent, I could hear that he too was fast asleep.

I had now to make my way past the camp, under the lee of the rhododendron bushes. The fires still burnt brightly, and the poor tired fellows were lying prostrate around them, wrapped in deepest slumber, their gay-coloured gaberdines paled in the moonlight, except here and there, when a fire, gleaming forth with a sudden flash, lighted up patches of red and amber, which stood out prominently where all else was colourless.

No one observed me, or, if they did, probably mistook me for some erratic member of their own fraternity. Amongst the number I recognised the Herculean form of Hatti, lying with his face upwards, and I could not help thinking, as I passed close to him with stealthy footsteps, how easy it would have been to drive a nail into his head, had *I* been Jael the wife of Heber, and *he* Sisera!

I dared not arouse him ; to have awakened one, would have been to awaken all. Otherwise I should have done so, as I needed some one to carry my block, which, though no encumbrance to me at present, I knew would be so further on, when I should require both hands free to help myself along.

The ground, which had thawed in the vicinity of the fires, was here thickly coated with frost, which crunched beneath each footfall ; yet no one moved. Nor was there even a breath of air stirring, to bear me company as I walked onwards, and it was not long before I found myself starting at my own shadow. The very beauty of the scene made me afraid, it was all so supernatural, so

pale, so still, so passionless, so spectral. I grew cowardly, and, stopping short, I felt I could not face it alone. Retracing my steps as far as Fanchyng's sleeping-place on the outskirts of the camp, I stooped till my lips almost touched the covering of the tilt.

"Fanchyng," I whispered—"Fanchyng, I want you, —come out!"

But there was no answer, though I waited long; she was sleeping too heavily to be awakened by a call so gentle, yet I dare not speak more loudly.

At last, despising myself for my cowardice, I determined to be brave, and go on alone. I was soon under the shelter of the copse, having taken care to enter it by the way which F—— and I had previously taken together, as a pathway had already been made for me there; whilst the moon shining through the branches afforded quite sufficient light to enable me to trace it by the fallen trees, that had been cut down as we passed early in the evening. I was about halfway through, when something rose at my feet with a whr-r-r, which startled me greatly. I had no doubt flushed a bird, a moonăl (hill pheasant), probably. On I went, the thick rhododendron leaves through which I brushed covering me with a shower of hoar frost. Then arriving at the rock I before mentioned, which I climbed on hands and knees, throwing my block before me at every few steps, I succeeded in reaching the top.

What a spectacle now presented itself to my view!

In the valley lay a white lake of transparent mist, and rising out of it, the snows, shrouded in unearthly vapour, looked mysterious and ghost-like. To the right, rocky mountains, shattered and riven, appeared like battlements for giant soldiery, whilst to the left were the beetling crags and swelling buttresses of the Singaleelah range. Dotted about the lesser, and unsnow-clad mountains, where the moonlight fell, were portions of 'mica schist,' which, sparkling brilliantly, looked like stars fallen to earth. Stars seemed not only twinkling above, but below me, and this glittering 'mica' produced the most extraordinary effect imaginable; whilst the dead pines standing with their trunks blanched, looked like phantom guardians of the whole.

It was altogether such a spectral and unearthly scene, that I realised in an instant how utterly hopeless it would be to attempt to portray it, and simply stood entranced, losing for awhile even my own individuality, feeling that I had almost entered some new world.

I do not know how long I had been standing there, when a sensation came over me as though some one behind were softly enveloping me in a wet sheet. Looking over my shoulder, I found that the rhododendron copse had vanished; the gleam of the many camp-fires was visible no longer, and the rock at my feet, with every other object, was shut out by a white ocean of mist.

My position was by no means a dangerous one. I knew that I had only to remain quietly where I stood, till

the cloud had passed over, and all would be well; but my heart beat fast and thick notwithstanding. My limbs were getting numb and frozen, and I knew not how long I could hold out. My first impulse was to call for help; but trying to reason calmly with myself, I saw how futile that would be, for no one *could* possibly find his way through the copse in the mist, even if he tried, while I should be exposing many to the risk of falling over the ridge into the abyss beneath.

As I reasoned thus with myself, the vapour grew gradually more dense, while the thickest part of the cloud passed over me, and I was surrounded by almost total darkness. A death-like stillness prevailed, the only thing audible being the thumping of my own heart.

Drawing my cloak more closely round me, I struggled to be brave. After a short time the mist became thinner, shining vapour succeeded darkness, and the moon asserting its supremacy gradually shone out brightly as before, whilst a stratum of vapour which had just arisen from the valley seemed floating beneath my very feet. In stooping to pick up my block, I became conscious of the appearance of a dark shadow or figure opposite; and on standing erect, a phantom of gigantic dimensions was before me. Terribly frightened, my heart this time stopped beating altogether, and a deadly faintness crept over me. I had grown nervous and superstitious. But summoning up all my courage, which rarely forsakes me utterly in times of need, I felt sure it must be only one

of those phenomena, which I had heard of as occasionally to be met with in these altitudes.

The moon was shining obliquely *behind* me, and what I saw might be nothing more than my own shadow, greatly exaggerated, thrown upon the lake of white mist at my feet. Without tarrying to convince myself of the truth or otherwise of this hypothesis, I descended the rock as quickly as I could, and retraced my steps; nor did I stop even to take breath till I reached the tent, when, for an instant pressing my ear to the canvas to ascertain whether F—— slept, I softly entered.

For one moment only I thought he was waking, as the open 'kernaughts' admitted a flood of light; in addition to which I must, forsooth, catch my foot in the dhurrie, and overturn one of the baggage baskets leaning against the wall of the tent; but he only turned over on the other side, and I could hear by his stertorous breathing that he was sleeping soundly as before.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BETHEL ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP.

IT was very difficult to arouse myself the next morning, when Catoo came calling me as usual with importunate voice. How heartily I wished he had been at the bottom of the Red Sea, as I lay silent, pretending not to hear! But, tiresome man! with him there was no remission, he only shouted more loudly than ever, 'Mem sahib! Mem sahib! *dary hi* (it is late),' considerably emphasising the latter word.

'You are not well, my child,' said F—— tenderly, on observing my inability to move. 'I allow you to do too much; you must have strained yourself last evening unpacking those portmanteaus. What a wretch I was to let you do it!'

Wretch? what a *fiend* then must *I* be, not to tell him all, instead of allowing him to reproach himself for my misdoings.

'Perhaps it was the straining I got in that water-course yesterday,' I replied meekly, feeling desperately guilty the while. 'Get me a cup of tea, and I shall soon be all right again.'

What would I not have given to be left in peace! I verily believe that nothing would have moved me that morning but 'conscience, that makes cowards of us all,' so afraid was I that any manifestation of fatigue should result in the oozing out of the truth, in case anyone of the camp *did* happen to see me pass. I made an effort therefore, which I think did at last constitute me a heroine for life. 'You are feverish too,' continued F——, watching me narrowly. 'Your face is quite flushed.'

At this juncture Fanchyng entered. 'Eh!' she exclaimed, elevating her flat eyebrows, and opening her funny little oblique-shaped eyes as wide as they would go. 'The mem-sahib has caught cold; she must not go on this morning, but stay behind with the sahib *logue*; and see! her head is quite hot besides.'

The diagnosis was identical then; if I did not make vigorous resistance at once, between the two I should soon be converted into a downright invalid.

'There is no doubt about it,' continued F——. 'Fanchyng is quite right, there is a determination of blood to the head; I must go and consult C—— immediately.'

'For pity's sake,' I cried, catching hold of his hand as it still rested on my fevered brain, 'do nothing of the kind. I am, believe me, quite well; I had rather a bad night, that is all, and—and the fact is, I think I caught a slight chill; and if you will sit down quietly and not be angry, and promise above all not to tell C—— (for I knew if he did I should never hear the last of it, my

unsuccessful ramble would be a joke against me for ever), I'll let you know everything.'

And I did tell him all; at which he tried to look angry, but could not succeed, feeling, I rather suspect, that I had been punished enough already; and he presently promised to allow me to go on early with Fanchyng as usual.

No sooner was I up than Catoo, like a bird of ill-omen, informed me that our kitmutgar was indisposed, also two of my dandy-bearers. The poor fellows get fever from exposure to the great variation of temperature, caused by the hot sun by day and the intense cold at night. This kind of fever is very common in India, but is neither infectious nor dangerous, and generally yields to quinine, of which, happily, our kind and thoughtful host has brought a good supply.

Hearing of the illness of two of my men, and not willing to tax the others too greatly, I decide upon walking part of the way, feeling much better since I arose. Fanchyng and I, therefore, with the rest of my body-guard, go on as usual, in advance of F—— and C——, who remain to see the camp broken up, and the men well on ahead with their loads; a very necessary precaution, experience having shown us that, unless they do so, the coolies often lag behind, and, instead of finding tents pitched at the end of our march, we have to sit down and shiver till they come straggling up, probably two hours after our arrival.

Although Fanchyng is not pretty, like my little Lattoo, of whom I thought so often, and wished for many a time, yet to watch her breasting the breeze as she climbed the steeps, and scrambled in and out amongst the rocks, was a fair sight to see,—her gay-coloured dress, fanned by the wind, fluttering in curves and lines that were full of natural grace and beauty. She might generally be seen walking hand-in-hand with her brother, an interloper also, —a 'stow-away,' who had smuggled himself into camp a few days after we started, and whom F—— now employs to carry the basket of tent pegs, as well as making him useful in various other ways.

Journeying on, we meet a man clad almost entirely in panther skins, followed by a number of little shaggy goats, whose necks are highly ornamented with tassels of scarlet wool, and bells hanging round them, their long hair trailing on the ground showing that they also have been clothed for 'moving in arctic circles.' All are laden with little pack-saddles filled with salt, procured from the salt lakes in Thibet, and are about as picturesque little creatures as can possibly be seen.

The Bhootias have a very singular tradition, or rather

prophecy, concerning the lakes I have referred to; one of which is so large that no salt has hitherto been found in it. But, according to the prophecy, this lake will one day also dry up, and salt be obtained in it; and when this comes to pass, it will be conveyed, not as now by the natives of the country, but by a white people from the south, who will carry it themselves to the cities of the plains. It is said that this lake *is* already drying up, and the natives, expecting to find salt in it, are consequently dreading the fulfilment of the prophecy.

There is another singular and very ancient tradition, believed in by Mahomedans, Hindoos, and Rajputs alike, which, though not quite apposite to the one I have just related, is nevertheless interesting, as showing the general belief amongst them, that this land will one day be subjected to a European Power. Towards the end of the world, it is said, a white man is to come riding on a white horse, bearing a white flag. All the nations of the world are to fall under his sway, and their names to be written on the flag, and there will then be a reign of universal peace and brotherhood,—a prophecy which, singularly enough, bears a very strong resemblance to that in the Book of the Revelation of St. John.

And now, having made a very steep ascent, we find ourselves in open moorland, and the frost begins to tighten over everything. Here and there a solitary rhododendron bush may be seen, whose hardy leaves, pinched with cold, shiver in the blast like living things. On our way

we saw several marmots, little animals very much like rats, only of a larger size. As we came along, we accidentally turned up two of their nests, which they make beneath the large stones. Like dormice, their habit is to sleep six months in the year; but they are now bustling to and fro, gathering in their winter store of rhododendron-buds, evidently expecting a long siege of cold weather.

All Nature wears a dreary aspect, and is wintry and *triste*. Even in the shelter of the chinks and furrows, in the rock fragments, that lie along our pathway, the little black and white lichens tremble with the cold. Observing plenty of dead wood lying about, I request my people to drag it along, and a blazing fire is soon made, by the side of which Fanchyng and I sit and wait for the rest. In an hour's time they come creeping along, in twos and threes, followed by the gentlemen. As we ascend higher, the cold grows more intense, and the wind blows stronger. The ground is covered with long coarse grass, every blade of which is bearded with an icicle; and with the exception of this, and the aconite, which follows our footsteps everywhere, there is scarce a weed or tiny rock plant visible.

A short distance before us, we see a small cairn of stones, on the top of which is a cluster of bamboo canes, hung with streamers of coloured rag, all fluttering in the blast. Some blackened embers, the remains of a recent fire, induce us to believe that the wild-looking man leading the salt-laden goats, whom we met early in

the day, had raised it as a lowly tribute to his God; and there was something very beautiful in this evidence of his faith in the Unseen, and in his having raised this 'little Bethel' on the summit of the lonely mountain, unobserved by human eye, in the presence alone of Him who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and in whose sight those worthless many-coloured rags—the best he had to offer—may be as acceptable as the gorgeous banners one often sees in modern Christian churches. I wonder, will the angel who bears the golden censer deign to add his prayers to those of the 'faithful,' and, mingling them with incense, permit them to ascend to the one Great Spirit? I trow yes.

Ah, me! who amongst us Christians, with all our boasted superiority and greater privileges, would thus pause on his solitary journey, after the example of this poor 'benighted heathen,' or of One, who though He needed it not in His divine nature, yet 'rose up early, and sought a place to pray?'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WE FIND TENT-LIFE PARTICULARLY CHARMING IN WET WEATHER!

WHAT a day it turned out to be! The wind, increasing each moment, no longer blew, but cut one like knives, and gave one slaps in the face, and boxes in the ear, hitting out hard and straight, as though it meant it. It hissed savagely, and howled dismally, and whistled defiantly, and seemed to penetrate every thread of one's garments, and to blow one's very teeth down one's throat. It came knocking against the poor coolies with such force, that they staggered beneath their loads like drunken men, and then it scouted round them as if in glee, before rushing off to some other victim. Then the rain began pattering drop by drop upon the hard rhododendron leaves, and finished by coming down in sheets, and in a short time we were as wet as we could possibly be. Well, there was at least some comfort and consolation in that. We could be no wetter at any rate, and knew the worst; but we were so blinded by it, not to say benumbed with the cold, that, observing a level piece of ground half a mile in front of us, which looked suitable for encampment, C—— called a halt.

Our purpose had been to go on as far as Mount Singaleelah to-day, but I doubt whether we should have been able to reach it before an inconveniently late hour, even if the rain had not made our further progress altogether impracticable. Fortunately, all the baggage coolies

are pretty well up, so that there is no delay in getting tents pitched, &c.

Arriving first, I watch F—— and C—— breasting the storm, as they plod through the wind and rain. Although there are no impediments in the shape of trees on the spot which C—— has chosen, yet, having been slightly descending the last hour, we have again come

upon dense vegetation of the smaller kind, all of which must be cleared before anything can be done; and if in fine weather tent-pitching is attended with so much noise and excitement, it can readily be imagined how great it must be during rain, when the hubbub and confusion increase tenfold.

Amidst the general excitement, the only things that seem to take life as it comes, and make themselves perfectly at home, are the *moorghees*. No sooner are they released from their baskets, than, giving themselves a shake and a flutter, they strut about as if nothing had happened.

The first thing invariably thought of, on arrival at encampment, is to make a fire; but this time, as I stand dripping and watch the process, it seems as though it never would be accomplished, defying as it does the efforts of each man, who, despising everyone else, tries his hand in turn with equal failure. The moss and sticks have become so saturated with wet, that it is almost hopeless to expect them to ignite.

At length, shivering to my very heart's core, I see a little smoke issuing from the Prometheus-like hand of Catoo, who, holding the moss, is blowing it with the most coaxing and irresistible puffs, till it rewards him at last by bursting into a flame. Meanwhile Tendook has been hastily pitching his tent, which, being of a different kind, requires less 'fixing,' and now comes to beg I will avail myself of it; an offer I accept, although I have

my misgivings whether, wet as I am, I shall be very much the better for the shelter. I am already a walking cataract, a miniature Niagara,—a hundred tiny streamlets, formed by the dripping of my waterproof, eddying down the incline, and creating quite a respectable Maelstrom, as they meet together in a pool below.

Divesting myself of my soaking 'waterproof,' which is altogether a misnomer in these mountain regions, where the downpour is but feebly expressed by a pelting of the feline and canine species, and where it rains little short of dragons and megatheria, I enter, and seat myself upon an empty baggage basket in the middle of the tent, placed there for the purpose by the thoughtful Tendook, and soon discover that the difference between standing out in the rain and escaping from it is even less than I had imagined. The tent is square, and its canvas being single, the whole thing is evidently intended for fine weather only. The rain first saturates the highly ornamented canvas, and then comes through. I watch it trickle silently down the 'kernaughts,' sitting upon my basket, dripping as contentedly as I can, knowing that ere long a further douche awaits me.

In a few minutes down comes the anticipated drip, drip, drip, upon my head, gently and tenderly at first, in single drops, and then in streams. I now take refuge under an umbrella—a ponderous arrangement of the Gamp order, with brass handle, green of course, and 'likewige' dripping,—also belonging to Tendook. Nothing

is farther from my intention, however, than taking cold, or allowing myself to be miserable; but in those moist moments, whilst sitting like Patience on a monument, I think I *did* wonder what in the world made people travel.

Forth from the pelting pitiless rain, like a wet spectre, comes C——, carrying a glass with water in it, together

with a bottle of cognac, of which he insists upon my taking a little, to prevent 'cold and fever, and all that sort of thing, you know;' and I certainly never saw a man look *so* wet in my life—a fish was nothing to it. He was dripping from every thread and pore. From the sleeves of his coat, from the lobes of his ears, from his fingers' ends, it fell in infinitesimal waterfalls, whilst the brim of his helmet was

encircled by a row of bead-like drops. Looking up at him, I watched a little streamlet wind its way round the helmet in search of outlet, and, overflowing its borders, trickle down the bridge of his aristocratic nose, as though it had been a shoot ready-made for the occasion. He complimented me, also, on my moist appearance, and told me I looked like a bit of salvage from a wreck.

F—— had chosen a small piece of table-land below, about twenty feet long, by ten broad, on the extreme ridge of the mountain—a kind of natural shelf—and congratulated himself on having discovered a delightful little spot for our tent, requiring no 'clearing,' as no vegetation of any kind was growing upon it. But I shall always be under the impression to my dying day, that that charming spot, on which nothing manifestly *could* grow, was situated on the 'watershed,' or source of some river, such a thoroughly watery situation did it subsequently prove to be.

In a quarter of an hour, that seemed little short of a century, F——, who has been doing his best to speed on the pitching and arrangement of the tent for my reception, sends Tendook up to say that all is ready. As I went outside, the first object on which my eye rested was Fanchyng, coming through the driving rain, and may I never again behold such a poor, miserable, drowned wretch as she looked! whilst, *pour combler de misère*, she must needs plunge on her way into an unseen bog, from which she had to be extricated by the united efforts of two

baggage coolies, who were following close behind her, and then without her mocassins, which remained, beyond all hope of recovery, somewhere at the bottom.

Neither is the cup of *my* misfortunes yet full, for, descending to the tent by a slippery path, I formed a closer acquaintance with Mother Earth than I intended, not only covering myself with mud, but spoiling my hat, whose beauty was now gone for ever. So thoroughly shaken and overcome was I by my fall, at the moment of entering the tent, that I could have cried heartily had there been a clean, dry spot whereon to sit down and have it out comfortably; but as no such luxury existed, I tried to console myself instead, by listening to F—— growling. And surely, if 'good men struggling with difficulties' are 'a spectacle for the gods,' he must have been a source of no ordinary entertainment and delight to those celestial magnates. During the process of tent-pitching he had worked himself up to a degree of mental irritation very unusual with him, but by no means to be wondered at under the circumstances, resulting, as he afterwards frankly confessed, in a very nebulous state of mind.

'My dear,' he exclaimed, as I presented myself—the 'my dear' uttered sententiously, and in the very reverse of a propitiatory tone—'this all comes of your travelling in a dandy: if you had done what I wished, it never would have happened.'

Now, it was quite true, he *had* wished me not to travel in a dandy, but in a dhoolie instead. Dhoolies are

of two kinds—the 'ferocious dhoolie' (a sort of bed), as we have seen; and another of a totally different character, where the person carried sits sideways in a sort of sling, the pole passing just in front of the neck, producing a painful feeling of decapitation, the upper part of the body being on one side of the pole, and the lower on the other, so arranged as to balance the machine. This mode of conveyance is lighter, and consequently more easily carried; but I objected to it, as being less comfortable than the Bareilly dandy. It was, consequently, dandy *versus* dhoolie for several weeks before starting; for I am not one who so meekly bows her head to lordly rule as perhaps wife should—rule too of the mildest and most indulgent always. So I felt subdued, and filled with self-reproach; yet I could not quite be brought to see how my obstinacy in travelling in a dandy could very materially alter the condition of the weather, and it was certainly puzzling to understand by what process he had arrived at this conclusion; but having so arrived, he had a right to stick to his theory with the tenacity of a Briton.

'If you hadn't persisted in travelling in a dandy, my dear, it never could have happened.'

But what he meant by the statement I hadn't the ghost of an idea; for he uttered it in the tone of one who had made up his mind to pursue a pet theory against all invasion, and with whom surrender was out of the question. So I did not attempt to argue the point, but left him master of the situation.

As our tent, unlike Tendook's, is fortunately impervious to external moisture, we have no need of an umbrella, being quite dry overhead, whilst a thick carpet of rhododendron leaves, which at this elevation are fully fifteen inches long and an eighth of an inch thick, had already been spread over the saturated ground. All, however, is unavailing; I sink ankle-deep in the 'dismal swamp' at each step I take. Wherever my foot rests but for an instant, it becomes an island surrounded by a pool of liquid mud, and I begin to feel in the condition of an amphibious animal, as defined by Charles Kingsley in his '*Water Babies*'—a something that 'can't live on the land, and dies in the water.'

I sit down upon a portmanteau, but it is only out of Scylla into Charybdis; it sinks so much even under my light weight, that I feel I must be descending into the very bowels of the earth. Whereupon I stand up again, and vainly try to change my soaking boots; but no sooner is one foot dry-shod than the other is wet, and this delightful state of things would no doubt have lasted till now, had not F——, in an agony of despair, shouted for Catoo, to see if he could suggest anything to mend matters. That ingenious functionary soon obeyed the summons, and I think I detected in his laughing eye a full appreciation of the absurdity of our position, which must have been quite irresistible to a Lepcha.

After a moment's reflection, he suggests that *branches* of rhododendron and large stones be substituted for the

carpet of leaves. Both are easily and quickly procured, and they answer the purpose of keeping our feet above the wet soil at any rate. By dint of balancing ourselves first on one foot and then on the other, we do at last contrive to make a tolerably satisfactory toilet, when, alas! in an unlucky moment F—— sits down on one of the little iron bedsteads, which first gives a loud snap, and then he and it subside on a level with the ground.

We had both ere this reached the climax of growling, and, as extremes meet, were just ready to turn the corner in the other direction, when the woe-begone bedstead, with its lame leg, and the 'come-over-and-help-us' expression it wore, proved too much for our gravity, and ended in our indulging in a thoroughly hearty laugh.

Completely worn out by our exertions, but feeling conscious that we still owed a duty to society, we ascended the quagmire which led to the dining-tent, where we found ourselves, figuratively speaking, in smooth waters, everything wearing as snug and comfortable an appearance as possible, C—— assuring us that, being high and dry, he had experienced none of those inconveniencies to which we had been exposed down below.

The most that we expected for refection on such an inclement night was a 'cold swaree;' but the cloth had already been laid with all due propriety, and the preliminary solemnities, which usually accompany an Englishman's dinner, be he where he may, were being

undertaken by the usual staff of kitmutgars. Our host, conservative to a degree, was wont to regard irregular habits as demoralising, if not altogether sinful; and he had evidently imbued the cook with a similar sentiment, for very soon a dinner was served which quite amazed us all. It must have been a supreme effort on his part, under such difficulties, and I know it was a supreme moment to us, hungry as we were; and no one could have appreciated C——'s conservatism more than we did then, or have done more ample justice to its results.

Before leaving the dining-tent, F—— collected the whole camp together, and gave a portion of rum to each. On returning to our 'watershed,' or whatever it might be, on which our tent was situated, we found the rain had quite ceased, and a solitary tearful little star was doing its best to shine above a long line of black cloud. Away in the western horizon the sky was comparatively clear, giving some hope of a better state of things on the morrow; and on entering our little ark, we also found that the waters there had abated considerably. The rain having ceased during our absence, the dhurrie had been laid down over the floor, and there was a manifest improvement in affairs generally. The kettle too—which always seems to be in good spirits—was singing its very heart out on the bright little stove, as if to say there was plenty of comfort yet in life, and we might as well cheer up and make the best of everything as *it* did.

The first thing I determined on doing was to wash

those portions of my travelling dress which had become soiled by my fall. I had insisted on Fanchyng's changing her clothes and going straight to her lair on arrival, telling her I would dispense with her services for the night; so tucking up my sleeves, I buckled to valiantly, as if to the manner born; and we should no doubt have made an interesting picture, had an artist been here to paint us.—*Materia*—picturesque contents of the tent itself: stove at other end; vulgar kettle sending forth its steam; F—— just composing himself in the arms of Morpheus; my scarlet dress and mocassins hanging on a line to dry; various baggage baskets of all sorts and sizes in the corner; lantern suspended from tent-pole; and—yes! why not?—myself also, by this time surrounded by a cloud of steam, scrubbing away vigorously in a large brass 'chilumchee,' or basin. Subject—'An Interior.'

My hat was spoiled beyond all remedy; my dress too, I soon found, had sustained great damage, my feeble scrubbing making very little impression upon it; but my mocassins, save that they presented what is termed a 'cockled' appearance from the rain, were a 'thing of beauty still, and a joy for ever.'

Congratulating me on my picturesque appearance, F—— soon fell asleep, remarking that, after all, it was 'clean dirt,' and if I failed in my praiseworthy endeavours, he supposed it would 'wear off;' evidently glad to dismiss the subject on such easy terms, and be left in peace

instead of being called upon to assist in the process. He was soon snoring sweetly, keeping up a trombone accompaniment to the musical laving of the water in C major against the sides of the 'chilumchee.'

(From F——'s memorandum book. Sketch from memory.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

FACES IN THE ROCKS.

THE next morning at the first peep of dawn, creeping softly out to ascertain what sort of day it was likely to be, I am not a little surprised to find F——, who has preceded me, standing in a very matutinal costume looking also at the indications of the weather.

The sky is ominously red, and miles of leaden vapour lying in the valley, are heaving wildly like an angry sea, which, to look down upon and into, makes one positively giddy. While we stand here, we are greeted by the muffled tones of our host, proceeding from beneath his rugs, likewise making anxious inquiries concerning the weather. At the same moment Catoo appears, the bearer of the very alarming information that the cook has fever, and *bahut bīmār hai* (is very ill); and that two of the ponies are disabled, one from a sore back, the other lame from an injury sustained on the march hither. This latter intelligence, however, affects us but little, as they are never ridden now; but as misfortunes seldom come alone, he adds with a rueful countenance, that our 'Sappers' have bolted.

This is indeed a serious matter, and we are at a loss to know how we can go on without them; but Tendook, joining us at this moment, says he thinks it more than likely, that they have simply fled to a small village twelve miles distant down the gorge, to find shelter from the rain, where they will probably remain till the sky clears, and then join us again.

Exposure to the damp, no less than sudden changes in the temperature, invariably brings on an attack of fever and ague with these people, whose *physique*, I fancy, is greatly impaired by eating so little animal food. They consequently lose all pluck in bad weather, although at other times they will bear cold, fatigue, and even hunger uncomplainingly. Rain they cannot endure, and I doubt whether any of them would have accompanied us had they foreseen this unprecedented state of things. There surely must be some great atmospheric mismanagement somewhere. One would be inclined to imagine that Oberon and Titania had had another falling out; for, as I have said before, after the breaking up of the rainy season, which we thought *had* taken place, with its accustomed punctuality, six weeks ago, no rain is expected till the monsoon comes round again.

This is a chapter of accidents. No sooner are we seated at breakfast, than one of our kitmutgars informs us that the calf is ill, in consequence of which the cow refuses to yield her milk. *We* are none of us the worse, however, at present, for the wetting we had yesterday, so

that we must not complain, but cheerfully put up with such small vexations as the foregoing.

We had struck tents, and were under weigh, when C—— was overtaken by another messenger, but this time, happily, of no evil tidings. He came to say that a Soubah—the diplomatic agent of the Rajah of Sikkim—

was on his way to meet him, and that we should find him *sitting on the top of Mount Singaleelah*, for thus the message was quaintly worded in the vernacular. So singular an announcement naturally amused us not a little, and, picturing him to our imagination as a sort of sphinx or presiding genius of the peak, the above was of course the kind of thing we expected to see; but I beg to say that the pipe is an addition and after-thought of F——.

We now pass through scenery extravagantly wild

and barren in the extreme, for Nature is here destitute of vegetation of every kind, except that of small herbaceous plants and a coarse shaggy grass, brown at this season, which hangs over the stern and ancient rocks, whose tints, from the combined influence of time and weather, have become so subdued and saddened, that the hardy lichens and bright little rock-plants seem to have crept into their cracks and crannies to hide themselves, as if afraid of 'looking out of keeping' with everything that is so very old and sad.

All is rendered more weird and savage still by the heavy masses of cloud which, like boiling vapour, continually roll over us; whilst the jagged portions of the enormous blocks of gneiss which lie along our pathway, occasionally wrenching fragments of it from the general mass hold it clinging to themselves, like spirits caught in the arms of giants. Everywhere rocks, heaped one upon another, are hewn and sculptured into such fantastic shapes and forms, that one cannot help fancying that giants in primæval time must have rudely fashioned their Ideal, and then left it for successive generations to marvel at. What castles in the air! What grim fortresses! What colossal faces look down upon us! the long grass which hangs over their foreheads like tangled hair only adding to the resemblance.

At six o'clock, but still broad daylight, even in this wintry season and misty weather—for the sun sets tardily in this northern land—the mountains far and near resound with the hammering of tent-pegs, and we catch sight of our encampment in a sheltered hollow enclosed to the right by a mural precipice. On one side rise sterile mountains, on the other stretches a verdant valley, and deeps wildly beautiful. All the men are well up, and pitching tents. Many of the tired baggage coolies may be seen already fast asleep, whilst others, squatting before their fires, are cooking their evening meal. Waiting the completion of my tent, I climb a little knoll, whence I can see, without being seen, the food of these simple folk not only cooked but eaten; and one instance is, I fancy, an example of that of all the rest, as far as custom is concerned, be they Lepchas, Bhootias, or Nepaulese.

Rice is first boiled in a 'deckshee,' and when sufficiently tender is taken out and strained back again through a cloth—usually part of their clothing!—till the water attains the consistency of arrowroot. This, which is called 'cungi,' they drink, leaving the residue of the rice to be eaten separately. This rice, with an ear or two of parched Indian corn, formed the only nourishment of these hardy mountaineers after their long day's toil.

I am now summoned to my own repast by the

squeaky and intermittent tones of our kitmutgar, who has lost his fever, but, in common with many others, is suffering from severe cold, his voice coming and going in fitful gusts and bursts of sound. In fact, by this time we are all experiencing the disagreeable consequences of yesterday's campaign, in the shape of colds of one kind or another, more or less highly developed; C——, on whom the greater elevation is evidently beginning to result in slight mental obliquity, gravely announcing at dinner the startling fact, that we are all suffering from the effects of *to-morrow!*

We were still seated at table, and everything was proceeding with the usual amount of ceremony and decorum, when all at once we heard a great uproar in camp. Everyone would seem to have congregated in one common centre, and to be engaged in very noisy and angry discussion. Suspending operations for an instant, we go out to ascertain the cause, and behold our tall Bhootia Syce, the central figure of the crowd, holding by the neck an unhappy and very ill-clad native, whom he was dragging along in the direction of our tent, amidst the shrieks and howls of the rest, all of whom follow in the wake.

This unusual excitement arises from the poor wretch having appropriated to himself the Syce's 'camul' or blanket. He is a stranger, who joined camp this morning, ostensibly to earn an honest pice or two; but it appears now to be the general opinion that he did so for the sole purpose of seeing what he could 'annex,' and I scarcely

know what fate would have awaited him, had not C—— and F—— interfered, insisting that the Syce, who seemed much inclined to take the law into his own hands, should relinquish his hold.

The verdict having been given, and justice administered by C——, peace and tranquillity followed, on the restitution of the blanket; and the culprit, being permitted to leave camp without further punishment, took to his heels, fled down the mountain with the swiftness of an arrow, and was out of sight in an instant.

This is the place where we hoped to have found the Soubah awaiting our arrival; but, contrary to our expectations, he is not here. I fancy the recent heavy rains may have made prolonged 'sitting on the mountain' rather a damp and uncomfortable proceeding, and that he probably returned with precipitation for warmth and shelter to his own quarters, wherever they may happen to be. But there are manifold evidences of some recent 'presence,' for in places where the ground is smoothest, curious bamboo tables, with high benches alongside them, have been made—a delicate attention, Tendook assures us, on the part of the Soubah, who has caused them to be prepared for us. These hill people, like all Orientals, take their food squatted on the ground, so that even in this remote part of the world, some dim tradition of the manners and customs of Europeans must have reached them. They could, however, have expected nothing short of giants, for the benches were so enormously high that C——

himself, although measuring more than six feet, could not, when seated on them, reach the ground even with his toes, whilst the tables were equally high in proportion.

By such *small* tokens did this mysterious individual bid us welcome; but, besides all these, here and there, little stacks of newly cut wood were piled, in readiness for our bivouac—an attention our poor men were duly grateful for, saving them, as it did, the fatigue and trouble of cutting it themselves, after their long day's march. To our great relief, Catoo here meets us with the gratifying intelligence that the little corps of 'Sappers' have returned to camp.

After dinner, we have a long discussion over the fire as to our future route; our attendants having urged us to alter it, and by leaving the Singaleelah Range, which would take us in a north-westerly direction over the Dumgongla and Kanglanamo Passes—the only approach to the glaciers in this route—to strike off hence to Pemionchi, and thence to travel due east to Jongli.

The reason they give for wishing us to change our original intention is, that whilst it was raining heavily with us, it was, in all probability, snowing in the greater elevations, and that, should such be the case, the passes would be choked with snow, and also that henceforward there will be no tracks to guide us along the way. We do not mean to abandon our first plans, however, unless obliged, believing their advice is not wholly disinterested, and that they are only trying to frighten us, hoping thereby

to succeed in inducing us to go to Pemionchi, where many of them—Tendook amongst the number—have friends. Besides which, a pilgrimage to the Buddhist temple and monastery at that place is a soul-saving exercise, a benefit we are not yet disposed to confer upon them ; for, should we consent to their proposal, not only should we have to traverse the same road twice—as we propose *returning* by way of Pemionchi—but, after having made so considerable an ascent, should have to descend at once seven thousand feet, and travel up an almost perpendicular path to Jongli, which stands at an elevation of fourteen thousand feet, and thence again have to come down to the valley of the Ratong, before we could reach even the base of the Snowy Range. We therefore await with great anxiety the arrival of the Soubah, who will, we hope, be able to give us some trustworthy information, and help us to a decision.

It begins to be a marvel to us all in these days, that we do not actually go mad from want of sleep, for the people of our camp—the greater number of whom, worn out by the day's fatigue, are asleep within two hours of arrival—are as lively as crickets at midnight, about which time they all begin talking and gambling, the latter being a perfect passion with these mountaineers. It is quite impossible to keep them quiet, and if they are not gambling, they either drawl out Thibetan songs, in a melancholy strain that makes one's sleep sepulchral, or set up an extemporaneous howl, in which all join in dismal discord.

Then from afar, during brief intervals of silence, come the Arcadian notes of a shepherd's pipe, played by little Rags, one of my dandy-bearers, which break the stillness not unmusically with strains plaintive and soothing to the ear.

These dissipated people keep their fires burning all night, replenishing them from time to time with the canes of the small bamboo, which, bursting in the flames, make loud explosions like that of musketry, all wildly echoed from rock to rock, and everything is bitterly antagonistic to sleep.

CHAPTER XXX.

MOUNT SINGALEELAH, 12,336 FEET.

THE cold now being very great at night at these elevations, I suggested to F—— that some better arrangement should be made for Fanchyng's shelter, proposing that a little blanket tent be rigged up at the back of our own, just large enough to contain her when lying at full length. This was easily accomplished by means of two sticks stuck into the ground at head and foot, and tied together at the top, after the manner of gipsies' tents, one long one being placed horizontally between them. This, with a blanket thrown over it, and a large piece of waterproof sheeting covering all, with which we supplied her, made exceedingly snug quarters.

During the small hours I fancied I heard myself called twice, 'Mem sahib! Mem sahib!' the sound apparently proceeding from Fanchyng's tent. Presently there was a piercing shriek, beginning in a high key, and descending the gamut like a groan.

F—— was on his feet in an instant, and making the most rapid toilet he could assume, more asleep than awake, poor fellow, shouldered an umbrella, which I

could see by the dim light afforded by the lantern he had mistaken for his rifle, and thus equipped went forth manfully to the rescue, with obscure notions of burglars, fire, and wild beasts blended together.

Walking in the direction of Fanchyng's tent, he found that young person standing erect, and apparently much frightened, declaring she had seen a snake rear its head at the foot of her tent. From her description, it could have been little short of a python or the sea-serpent himself. She had doubtless eaten fungus, or lichen, or some other indigestible compound, before retiring for the night; or her change of quarters had affected her slumbers, and it was all the result of a dream, as F——, fully awake by this time, tried to assure her, when, on making a minute search, he found nothing.

At length dawn arriving, I got up to see the sun rise above the noble Singaleelah range.

As I have stated, three sides of our encampment are bounded by sterile mountains, which frown down upon us with a menacing aspect; but below, stretches a wondrous expanse of valley, and the eye wanders on this side over mountain steeps, from their barren summits clothed with

arctic lichen, and here and there a rugged pine, down to the region of tropical vegetation, where the outlines of the stately palm and feathery bamboo may frequently be recognised, even from this altitude, and the whole forms a combination of gentle beauty and savage grandeur rarely to be met with.

As we ascend and descend, it is exceedingly interesting to note the changes which take place in the vegetation, not only in the trees themselves and their parasites, but in the small plants which clothe the ground. We enter the region of a particular tree, and as we leave that behind, another takes its place; and so on with the smaller flora. We pass, for instance, through a zone or belt of pines, rhododendrons, and hill-bamboo; then descending further, we come upon chestnut, oak, maple, birch, acacia, cherry, pandanus-palm, sol, plantain, and others *ad infinitum*, till we reach a variety of tropical palms and bamboo in the warmer climate of the valleys. Even at this elevation there are far fewer deciduous trees than one sees in the winter in England, where it always strikes me as cruel and unlike nature to rob them of their clothing, just when they seem to need it most.

We are to halt here a day or two, not only to give ourselves, but our poor attendants rest, and looking in the direction of the camp, I see men in strange attire. They are the retinue of our Soubah, whose advent we hope is now not far distant. One of them coming up to me, and 'kowtowing' his very best (making a salaam), tells

me he will be here to-morrow, and we look forward to his arrival, as to some perfectly new sensation.

F—— and C—— now join me, and we very soon observe these men—our own assisting—hauling along three heavy slabs of 'gneiss,' like elongated mile-stones, which puzzle us not a little; but this Soubah is altogether such a mysterious personage, that conjecture is useless. After breakfast, C—— goes with his rifle in search of moonāls into the forest, whence a report reaches us at frequent intervals, echoed from one mountain to another, till the air seems vibrating with muffled guns.

We are here joined by a nephew of Tendook, named Goboon, an interesting lad with a soft girlish face, and features of a very refined type. Over his shoulders his hair hangs in long flowing curls; but, in spite of this, he possesses a noble and manly bearing, and carries his head magnificently. He wears a turban of Lepcha cloth, striped with blue and buff, a short full tunic of scarlet cloth, so made as to leave the neck and chest bare, and a kirtle confined at the waist by a belt, from which hangs the usual Lepcha 'ban,' encased in a handsome silver scabbard. Every movement of his frame is full of natural grace and dignity, and he reminds me forcibly of the striplings one reads of in the Bible. I observe that, although he mingles with the rest, and addresses them quite familiarly, they one and all show him every token of respect; and it is easy, even among these semi-barbarians, to see who are of gentle birth.

Catoo, who has been thus far before, now comes to inform me that a lovely view of Mount Everest is to be obtained some two hundred feet above, with—as far as I can understand him—a lake, or tarn, in the foreground. Accordingly, collecting my sketching materials together, I make ready for the climb.

All my dandy-bearers were in attendance; but as F—— and Tendook offered to accompany me, I decided, with their help and that of my alpenstock, to walk.

'You may all return to your camp,' I said, addressing them, thinking they would be only too glad to have their services dispensed with.

'Very good, Mem sahib,' broke in Hatti, patronisingly, evidently regarding himself as an exception—he always seemed to take a sort of proprietary interest in me—'you can walk with me, and the sahib, and Tendook. We don't want *these*,' looking round contemptuously on about a dozen others. 'We don't want you,' he added, waving his hand majestically; '*you may go*.'

'What!' exclaimed Nautch-wallah, in a peevish and deeply injured tone, separating himself from the group. 'Who are you to say *I* am not to go with the Mem sahib? You are all very well to *carry* her; but who's to run down the 'khud' after her easel, I should like to know, if the wind blows it away, as it did the other day?' casting a glance first at Hatti's massive unwieldy figure, and then at the crowd for approbation. 'You can't run, *you!* ha! ha!'

'Well then,' I said, to end the matter, for I thought they were coming to blows, 'you can both come with me if you like.'

'And if I don't go too, Mem sahib,' said the little Lepcha named Joogoo, 'who is there to tell you the names of the mountains and the plants?'

'*I* shall carry her *taswir ke chiz* (sketching things),' exclaimed another, in a dogged determined tone.

'And *chota* Rags, Mem sahib, *chota* Rags,' I heard a small plaintive voice saying behind me.

Turning round I saw such a disappointed, forsaken look in the little man, that I replied, 'Of course, *chota* (little) Rags,' as they all call him now, 'of course you must come; how could I do without you? run and get your flute, and you can play whilst I paint;' and seeing the eager faces of the others, all anxious to be thought worthy to be of help, I said, 'There, you may *all* come if you wish it.'

In an instant the whole rabble were off, with expressions of glee, laughing, shouting, and scrambling up before me, hand linked in hand, like so many children.

Catoo's *taswir*, however, turned out to be rather a failure; Mount Everest obstinately refused to show himself. But extending our ramble we reached the verge of a precipice, below which yawned a frightful gulf. It would have been quite *impossible* to stand and look down into it; but, throwing ourselves on the ground, we crawled along to its edge, and gazed into the almost fathomless

abyss beneath; after which Catoo, walking by my side, related a sad story connected with this spot. Some years ago a Nepaulese lad fell over, but was caught by a ledge of projecting rock. His cries reached a shepherd who was tending his flocks some little distance off. Trying to descend to his rescue, the brave fellow was dashed to pieces, whilst the lad managed to scramble up alone, and was *saved.*

This is one of those problems that puzzle us sorely in this world of ours: how He, who is said to number the very hairs of our head, and without whose ken not a sparrow falls to the ground, should yet permit such a fate to overtake one, whose true heroism seems the rather to merit great reward. Yet instances of the kind are met with each day we live—how one, ministering to the sick in a contagious disease, falls a victim to it himself, although the patient lives; whilst another, plunging into the cold wave to rescue a drowning man, is frequently lost, although he for whose succour he risked his life will probably reach shore in safety.

But our understanding is finite, and 'our thoughts not as His thoughts.' It is one of those mysteries that death alone can solve; yet it may be that such noble deeds have their immediate reward, in a very glorious awakening in another state of being. For although we, in our ignorance of the future, look upon the continuance of our lives here, with all their toils and sorrows, as a thing so greatly to be desired, we know not, except in

the mere abstract, how infinitely better that other life will be that awaits us, or how, if we *did* know, we might regard the swift arrow of death, that ushers us within its portals, as a thing to be coveted and yearned for, with an impatience and ardent longing beyond all else. The All-good and kind may, in taking them at once from this world, where so much is evil, reward such Hectors by introducing them into instant and amazing happiness. It is thus alone, believing firmly as I do in an overruling Providence ever about our path, that I can in my own poor mind reconcile that which otherwise would seem so strange and irreconcilable.

An hour or two later in the day, F—— and I were fortunate enough to see one of those phenomena which are not unfrequently observed in these Alpine heights, and which went far to explain the colossal apparition which concluded my midnight adventure. Standing on the verge of the mountain, and looking down into the valley I have before spoken of, I found myself suddenly enveloped in a soft mist, in the centre of which my own figure, greatly exaggerated, was darkly shadowed. The whole thing appeared so suddenly, that I was at first quite startled: a giant phantom seemed again to have arisen before me. As I moved, it moved; I walked along a few paces, and saw it following me; I raised my hand, and the spectre raised its hand also; and then it flashed across my mind that I was in a sunbow. F—— was not far off, and, summoning him, he made another

giant spectre beside me. Around our shadows were zones of rainbow light; but even as we watched it, it all gradually faded away with the mist, and the valley at our feet became as radiant as before.

After this, sitting at my tent door, I sketched the natives as they passed to and fro. Having observed my occupation, Tendook at length presented himself in the most alarming and overpowering 'get up' it is

possible to imagine—amber satin, covered with a pattern of green dragons, and lined with crimson silk brocade, his portly frame adorned with as much jewellery as he could conveniently carry—and asked me to take his likeness. He of course looks infinitely better in his every-day garb; but not liking to wound his mind by telling him so, for the effect

must have been produced by no ordinary pains, I accede to his request.

We must all have felt how strongly the power of association acts occasionally in recalling memories of the past: it may be of things forgotten long ago, but still lying hidden within the secret chambers of the brain. We all know how simple a thing will do it—the scent of a flower, the ripple of the sea, the murmur of the wind, a single note of music, a look even—and what a magic spell such association often weaves, in not only recalling events, but thoughts, feelings, and even momentary sensations. It has been related by one who well knew the marvellous power of this association, that once upon a time a poor Scotch artist, having left his native hills, came to the busy metropolis to seek for employment. He had doubtless fancied, like Dick Whittington, that its streets were paved with gold, or had probably heard that England was called by the Phœnicians '*Tin* Island.' However that may be, he found but small encouragement in his art, and wandering, disappointed and sad, from street to street with almost empty pockets, he came suddenly upon a Highlander playing the familiar bagpipes. Those wild and discordant strains called up visions of his native mountains; and as he listened, the tears chasing each other down his cheeks, he thrust his hand into his pocket, and, as he himself declared afterwards, 'I could na help it, I just gi'ed him my last halfcrown.'

So, whilst taking Tendook's portrait, I keep think-

ing of a sweet summer day, just before leaving England for India, and the scent of the honeysuckle and meadow-sweet in the hedgerows comes wafted towards me across the time waves of four long years.

I was sitting under a row of elms, sketching a broken-down and superannuated waggon, which for lack of room elsewhere had been cast aside on a road-side bank. Full of poetry was this time-worn waggon, its rickety wheels covered with marl, telling of years of rumblings to and

fro, in shady lanes, and goings with the team to water in green pools, and of lingerings outside the 'Wheatsheaf,' whilst Hodge went in to have his mid-day 'glass.' As I thus sketched, a farmer came up on his homeward way, and after standing and looking at me with much amazement over a stile, exclaimed:

'You beant niver goin' to put that there old ran-shaklin in yer pictur, ma'am. Law!' added he, apologetically, 'if I'd know'd that, I'd 'a had 'en painted and tackled up a bit; or if you wanted a waggon, or cart, or the likes o' that to draft, why, bless'ee, I got a *bran new 'un* in that shed yander.' The farmer comprehended as little as old Tendook, who arrayed himself thus in gorgeous apparel, that the poetry and pictorial beauty of things lie chiefly in their being time-worn and dilapidated.

The sketch being finished to his entire satisfaction—he is in ecstasies over the bright gold ornaments round his neck—Catoo stands before me with a low salaam, and begs that I will 'write' his *taswir* also. Natives are all wonderfully fond of having their likenesses taken, and he forms a much more pleasing subject certainly—a good-looking Lepcha, about five-and-twenty, in his ordinary costume, his hair plaited in one long tail, which is the distinguishing mark between the sexes amongst this tribe, the men plaiting it in one tail, the women in two.

After this little Rags presents himself, a meek petitioner for the same favour; but tired by this time, I examine his flute instead, promising to gratify him at some future period. It is merely a small piece of bamboo cane, an inch in diameter, in which five or six holes have been burnt—a slight instrument, truly, to emit sounds so sweet and Arcadian.

Then all go their way, and how pleasant it is to sit alone, under a sky of cloudless azure, whilst vision after

vision comes floating through the brain, not obtrusively, but, like slow-paced shadows, vague and strange and only half real, or as belonging to some previous existence. Have we not all felt something like this also when reclining in the sunshine on a summer day, too indolent to think in earnest, or concern ourselves with life's complications, and when even the billows on its ocean seem breaking calmly on quiet sunlit shores? At such moments—oases in the desert of our lives—a tranquil feeling steals over us, and we hardly seem to be living in a real world of work and action, but floating somewhere beyond it. Then are our very sorrows forgotten, those spectres which follow our footsteps, and cast dark spots upon our sunshine; forgotten, that is, as far as the incidents themselves are concerned, but not so, surely, in their influence on our lives. For it is sorrow that often awakens the very divinest part of our being, which otherwise might never have started into life, nor would Nature, which with many is but a dead language, appeal to us so eloquently as she does. I cannot believe in one who has known nought but happiness—one who has never struggled in those unseen crises of the heart, as at one period or other of their lives all must who have truly *lived*—holding fellowship with either storm or sunshine.

While I thus idly linger, as in a pleasant trance, the peaceful day passes into evening. Slanting shadows lengthen athwart the mountain, till the valley is wrapped in shade. I watch the blue line creep slowly along it, until,

extending upwards, it gathers everything far and near in one sombre tint of grey. Mists rise and shut out distant objects one by one, and the air grows chill. The firing of C——'s gun ceases, the echoes are hushed; he must be returning with his spoils. F.——, too, appears, a little black speck in the distance, as he comes scrambling down the mountain, whither he had gone on an exploring expedition. The coolies light their fires, and smoke ascends from a dozen nooks and corners. Wood crackles, lights gleam, shadowy figures flit here and there, whilst the subdued hum of voices—for they are seldom boisterous at this hour—and a plaintive, wailing air, played by 'Little Rags,' who, as usual, is telling out his love, as he sits apart on a moss and lichen-covered rock, sound wondrously peaceful and dreamy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SOUBAH OF MONGMOO.

We had pictured to our imagination something so sphinx-like and out of the ordinary way in the Soubah, that great was our surprise when, early this morning, on hearing of his arrival, and leaving our tents to receive him, we found one of the *prettiest* and most benevolent old men possible, but so very old and patriarchal-looking that he might have been Noah, or one of those who flourished about the time of the Flood, if, indeed, he were not altogether pre-Adamite. I should say, speaking advisedly, as one who would not libel him, that he had not washed for centuries at least. This fact alone, however, adds greatly to his pictorial appearance, for the rich and mellow colouring of his skin, by nature intended to be fair, is perfectly charming, artistically considered, and he is the exact personification of one of Rembrandt's glorious pictures, mellowed by time; and were one told that he had been sitting and smoking himself over the fire for a thousand years, one would scarcely feel surprised.

The expression of his face is extremely pleasing. He

has to an unusual extent the laughing Lepcha eye, which makes him look as though he were always mentally enjoying a bit of sportive raillery, to which he never gives vent in words, or as if, having discovered the vanity of all things mundane, he regards us with pitying curiosity, wondering what we had come thus far to see, and revelling in the idea that we, too, should one day waken up to the fact that all things living are vanity.

His hair, which is perfectly white, hangs in long, loose masses over his shoulders, whilst his costume—a robe of garnet-coloured cloth—extends to his feet, which are encased in mocassins of divers colours. He also wears a large broad-brimmed hat of finely plaited grass, bound round the edge with the fur of the 'cat-bear'—a small animal inhabiting the higher elevations, the fur of which resembles the finest sable—and from the capacious pouch, formed by the loose folds of his robe above the girdle, he produces eggs and a bottle of wild honey, and places them at C——'s feet. But even then he appeared to have any amount of small personal luggage concealed within; and I may as well say here, that, before leaving, I saw him at different times, when necessity called for them, produce from his bosom a tinder-box, a brick of Thibet tea, a brass pipe, his chop-sticks, and tweezers.

He is a man of no mean stature, and with his arms folded over his breast, or lying calmly by his side—for he is sparing of both words and gesture, as one who has grown too wise for speech—he is a very wooden-

figured man, and carries me back to the shadowy days of childhood, when on Sunday afternoons, all other toys, puzzles, and such-like wicked week-day amusements having been put beyond my reach, Noah's Ark was brought forth as a religious Sunday treat, together with a Scripture picture-book, wherein Daniel in a den of lions rampant seemed always the most prominent. I can remember now, as if it were but yesterday, how that, by a perversion of facts which clings to me still—showing the omnipotence of early teaching, pictorial or otherwise—Daniel was represented as an old bald-headed man, in a blue dressing-gown, while a very young king indeed, surmounted by a coronet of yellow and red, was looking through a grating to see how he was getting on. This, together with a picture representing a group of open-mouthed alligators on the banks of the Nile, generally sent me to my little bed with a whole Tattersall's of incipient nightmares.

Noah's Ark in those days was the very load-star of my existence, and Sunday, I am obliged truthfully to confess, has never been quite the same happy day, since—those golden gates past—it was put away with other childish things. As I look at this gentle old man it is like a dream revived, for my Ark family were clad in garnet-colour too, and also wore broad-brimmed, low-crowned hats, the only difference seeming to me to exist in the fact, that the Soubah was endowed with feet and legs, whereas *they* rested upon the basis of their habiliments

only. I can remember, too, at that time when thought began to dawn out of the chaos of mere sensation, that I regarded the former appendages as post-diluvian, adopted by reason of the general sloppiness of nature, after the subsiding of the waters, which rendered a kind of stilts necessary to get about the world in, when they left the ark. Favourite of all the family was Shem, on account of a pleasing docility of expression, of which the Soubah forcibly reminds me.

It is not easy to realise that this delightful old Philistine, the Soubah, is a great personage amongst his own people, having Sepoys at his command, and a numerous retinue; but so it is, and as he loiters silently about the camp, the only interest and curiosity of which he seems capable, are evidently vested in me. He had never, as he subsequently informed F——, seen an Englishwoman before in Sikkim.

After having communicated our difficulties to him, C—— takes out Major Sherwill's map, and consults him about the route we are to follow; and I am glad to say he has not only set our fears at rest with regard to our projected journey along the crest of the Singaleelah Range, but has sketched a programme for us, which

sounds very encouraging. He also promises one of his own men as Guide.

According to an arrangement made between C—— and the Kajee of Yangting, we were to have found men awaiting us here with supplies of rice; but as they have not come, C—— sent a messenger to him this morning, his dwelling being two days' march down the valley, to remind him of his promise, for the people of our camp are complaining sorely of the shortness of provisions, and we do not well see how we can pursue our journey unless food reach us. Should it not do so speedily, it will be more than provoking.

We spend the morning in drying and pressing the specimens of moss and lichen which we gathered on each day's march in coming hither, and are all busily occupied in various ways, when our attention is directed to a green knoll above our encampment, where a crowd of persons seems to have collected. Curiosity prompting us to join it, we find the Soubah and a number of his followers in the process of erecting the three slabs I have before mentioned, on the margin of a tarn, situated in a basin or hollow of the mountain. This tarn, which is hidden until approached quite closely, we had not even imagined to exist.

We soon learn that these slabs are intended to represent C——, F——, and myself, and are to commemorate the interesting fact of our having encamped on this mountain. The Lepchas regard these tarns as sacred,

and there may be a deeper significance than we ourselves were aware of, in these simple people erecting memorials of our advent, by its still waters, where they look like Druidical remains. When night at last wore on, it made me feel quite miserable to think they were so lonely.

The large one in the centre represents C——, as becomes the greater dignity of his social position; that to the right F——, and the little fat stumpy one looking like an excrescence, myself, which I feel slightly inclined to

resent, being, I beg to say, neither fat nor stumpy; but then in this country a woman is nothing socially, a '*koosh nae*,' which being interpreted means *nothing*.[1]

I once knew a lady in the plains who, having called at the house of a friend to enquire after the health of a mother and her new-born babe, and on prolonging her

[1] Spelt *kuckh na*, but pronounced as above.

enquiries, begged to be informed of the sex of the little stranger, was gravely answered by the native servant, '*koosh nae, mem sahib*,' it happening to be a girl. Should you unfortunately be one of the weaker sex, and ask permission to see the interior of one of their temples or mosques, you will be told, with more candour than politeness, that 'neither dogs nor women are allowed to enter!'

I am by no means one of those strong-minded females who advocate what is mis-called 'woman's rights;' on the contrary, I believe women have tenderer, sweeter, purer, if not nobler, rights than such advocates wot of —rights best suited to the gentler nature of her sex, and hidden deep in the sweet and gentle life of home; but there are limits to the depreciation of womankind in the social scale, and in behalf of my Oriental sisters I object to the above order of ideas.

There is, however, a little Eden even in this hemisphere, all amongst the Kasia Hills in Eastern Bengal—a happy land where women command the men and 'rule over them;' where the men are domestic drudges and 'keepers at home,' looking after the children;—where property legally and by custom descends through women; —where the boys are '*koosh naes*' and the girls, for once, are everything, and have it all their own way!

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONJUGAL DIFFERENCES.

HAVING determined upon adhering to our original intention of travelling over the Singaleelah Range, we have been occupied all the morning in taking out the warm clothing we have hitherto kept in reserve for the greater heights, mine being either thickly wadded or lined with fur, thus obviating the necessity of cumbering myself with a number of wraps. We have also packed up all the heavy baggage, such as camp bedsteads, and tent furniture of every kind that we can absolutely dispense with, as it is impossible for the coolies to carry any but light loads over the steep and rugged mountain passes which we shall henceforth have to traverse. We therefore purpose sending fourteen men, heavily laden, together with our worse than useless ponies, to Pemionchi, to await our arrival there. As they will be descending the whole way, each man is to carry a double load, and we are not sorry to feel that we shall have fewer in camp to feed, in these barren and inhospitable regions, in case of continued scarcity. We also instituted a grand search for an aneroid ther-

mometer, and two pairs of dark-blue spectacles which were packed together in a case by themselves, F——, as an old Alpine traveller, knowing the great importance of the latter in avoiding snow-blindness; but our search being fruitless, we are forced to the unwilling conclusion that they must all have been left behind.

On opening one of my portmanteaus, however, which I had had no occasion to do until now, I found concealed amongst the folds of a dress the little silver amulet, containing charms, which Lattoo was so desirous I should bring with me the evening I last saw her. The poor girl, strong in her belief in its efficacy, and evidently determining I should not go without it, must have placed it there without my knowledge. The sight of it almost brought tears to my eyes, for I had been thinking much of her lately, feeling intuitively that all was not well, and longing for tidings.

We have again been enveloped since the morning in such impenetrable fog that we cannot see six yards before us, and the dishevelled world seems once more to have surrendered itself hopelessly to chill mists, which give one an incipient feeling of rheumatism even to behold; and tumbling over tent-pegs has of course been once more the great diversion of the day. Should it not clear to-morrow, we shall have to hold on here, as it would be utter madness to ascend these precipitous heights in such weather. As we sit within our tents watching the mist scudding by, we only wish we could 'indent' on

the Rajah of Sikkim for a salvo of artillery, to bring down the rain and clear the sky.

The 'shikaree' has just brought in some game which he shot early this morning before the fog came on, and which we are to have cooked for dinner. Game in the Hills, if eaten soon after it is shot, is always tender; but if kept till the following day, becomes hard, and then requires hanging for a much longer period, so that we generally 'kill and eat.' We brought this man with us ostensibly to shoot moonāls, the most magnificent bird it is possible to conceive, the size of a small turkey. Although to be found in numbers at this elevation, they fetch at Darjeeling the high price of 32 rupees (3*l.* 4*s.*), on account of their plumage, and we are sorely puzzled to know why he can find none of them, although he often bags the *hen* moonāl. He is always saying 'We shall meet with them to-morrow,' but the 'to-morrow' never comes; and I cannot help stating here, although I may seem guilty of an anachronism, that not one does he bring down for us during the whole march, but that a few days after our return to Darjeeling, they are to be bought by the dozen. Of course the inference is plain, but I am happy to say that this man is not a Lepcha. Lepchas would be incapable of such treachery.

F—— is making an ornithological collection, and, with this exception, has obtained birds to be met with at every elevation. Surrounded by his bottles of arsenical solution and corrosive sublimate, like some alchemist,

he has been squatting before the fire all the day, busily occupied in preserving them; and in various ways we all try to kill time till dinner is ready, which, whatever be the weather, rises and sets like the moon or stars, or some other equally unalterable law of nature. Happily the cook has been able to resume his duties, the fever, from which he was suffering, having yielded to large doses of quinine.

As rice is so scarce, our kind host gave a sheep to the camp before retiring for the night—a great treat in the estimation of the Lepchas and Bhootias, who will eat any kind of meat. Gathering together like eagles round a carcase, they did honour to the occasion by imbibing deep potations of 'murwa,' an intoxicating drink made from the fermented seed of millet, of which they partake very freely at their carousals. During the night watches some consequently grew very merry and musical, their minstrelsy, however, being none the more melodious from the fact of its being Bacchanalian, whilst others engaged in small feuds, which occasionally seemed to result in blows. At last, matters became so serious that F—— went out to try to quell the uproar; but they were too far gone to heed remonstrance, and his efforts proving ineffectual in restoring tranquillity, sleep for us was of course out of the question.

Towards morning I was awakened by the most dismal wailing, close to the 'kernaughts' of our tent. At first I took no notice of it; till the sighs and groans not only continuing, but growing more desperate

each moment, I felt sure it was some poor wretch in trouble come to seek redress from the *Sahib logue.* Hastily dressing, I went out, fully expecting to see Tatters or Pugla-wallah, as they call him, the poor half-witted man, whom so many seem to oppress. I was not a little surprised, therefore, when, instead of Pugla-wallah, I saw Fanchyng looking like a wounded fawn, and sitting in a most wobegone attitude on the frozen ground, dissolved in tears, and her clothes wet with dew, a very moist specimen of humanity altogether. There was quite sufficient light to enable me to see further that her white sleeves and jacket bore marks of violence, whilst her hair, usually so neatly plaited, hung in tangled masses over her face.

I guessed at once that there had been some misunderstanding between her husband and herself, which generally ends in bruises, if not in still more serious consequences; for these stalwart dwellers of the mountains—the Bhootias—think nothing of beating their wives severely on the smallest provocation. One would have thought that in this simple pastoral life there was no room for contention of any sort, but that, alas! is only a dream of Arcadia. Human nature is identical, wherever one finds it; and her woman's instinct had, I fancy, prompted her to come to me for sympathy, as, according to her notion, I was one of the 'ill-used sex.'

I tried hard to elicit the reason of her distress, but could at first get no satisfactory account of what had

happened, violent sobs being the only answer; but after a long process of extraction, vigorously sustained on my part, amidst increased wailings and more copious tear-shedding on hers, I succeeded in making her confess at length, that Nimboo, availing himself of his authority as a husband, *had* administered a more than ordinarily severe dose of correction, which, from her downcast look and manner of telling, I could see had not been wholly unmerited. On my intimating this, she told me I was right, and from gesture, and a word or two helping me here and there, I was able in some way to connect her story.

It would seem that whilst sitting over their fire, devouring the sheep last night, elated no doubt by the effects of 'murwa,' Nautch-wallah, who was seated beside her, had not only picked out the tit-bits of the animal from his own platter, and put them into her mouth with his fingers—a mark of signal favour with all Orientals—but had subsequently, in true English fashion, and in imitation of F——, who, truth to tell, is occasionally guilty of a similar indiscretion with the chronicler of these pages, put his arm round her waist. These little attentions she did not repel as Nimboo expected she would have done. Hence the castigation, and hence these tears!

Ten o'clock A.M.—The Soubah, who has all along been the guest of Tendook, has just come to take leave, and no supplies of food having yet been sent into camp by the Kajee of Yangting, he has obtained for us two maunds (160 lbs.) of rice and twenty-two seers (52 lbs.) of

bhoóta from Mongmoo, which we trust will keep the wolf from the door till help come; but it is a mere nothing when one considers that each man consumes, or ought to consume, at least two pounds per diem. With it, however, the Soubah believes we may safely pursue our journey, added to the full expectation of the promised supplies overtaking us, in charge of the messenger whom C—— sent to the Kajee yesterday.

We thank him for all his courtesy and kindness to us and our people, and then bid him farewell. The Soubah, expressing his deep regret that, being an *old* man, he is unable to accompany us himself, introduces the person whom we are to take with us as guide, assuring us he is thoroughly acquainted with the route, being a Nepaulese herdsman, who leads his kine along the Singaleelah Range into Sikkim for pasture regularly every year during the summer months.

Notwithstanding his humble calling, he wears a scarlet tunic embroidered with gold and black, and is unquestionably a fine, manly, and intelligent-looking fellow. But I note that he has a treacherous eye, in spite of his frank and manly bearing; and confess to having taken an intuitive and instantaneous dislike to him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'MRS. SYNTAX IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE.'

We have been detained at Mount Singaleelah three days, not only waiting for food, but hoping for a change of weather, which has been no less foggy and impracticable here than when we were encamped on Mount Tongloo. But to-day being a great improvement upon yesterday, although there is still a little mist hanging about the higher ridges, we intend to make a brilliant effort, and start as soon as tents can be struck.

More rice and bhoota have also reached camp during the night, sent by our kind old friend the Soubah, the quantity being sufficient to last several days. Despatching another messenger to that tiresome and incorrigible Kajee, to inform him that we shall be marching along the Singaleelah Range, and urging him to send supplies after us without delay, we have every hope—as we make short marches—that they will overtake us before the present stock is exhausted.

The first messenger whom C—— despatched, however, returned this morning, with the assurance from the Kajee himself—who appears to know our plans better than we do ourselves—that we *must* pass through the Rajah of

Sikkim's territory, and that we should find the necessary stores awaiting our arrival at Yangting. But this, F—— and I cannot help fearing, is a mere excuse, the Kajee having been told positively to send them *here*. Less sanguine than our host, we begin to suspect some little treachery; but he assures us that were the Kajee to play us false, or show us any incivility, it might cost him too dear, and that he has too lively a recollection of the retributive justice of the British Government to venture upon it. We can only hope, therefore, that he may be brought to reason by this second messenger; but it is anything but consoling to remember that in 1849 this same man, then Soubah of Singtam, despitefully illtreated Drs. Hooker and Campbell, made prisoners of them and their people, kept them confined in a close cell, and nearly starved them. Nor was it till the warlike attitude of our Government alarmed the Rajah, and troops were sent to procure their release, that the Kajee ceased hostilities, and gave freedom to the captives. The Rajah—an amiable man himself—is but a tool in the hands of his ministers, who do pretty much as they like, not only with him but with his dominions also. He was not allowed to go unpunished, however, being made responsible for the conduct of his subordinates. The loss of part of his territory was the consequence, while the annual compensation of 300*l.* per annum granted him on his cession of Darjeeling, mentioned in an earlier chapter, was henceforth withdrawn.

Whilst busy in our several ways preparing for the

march; Nimboo comes to ask permission to join the party who are gone on to Pemionchi, urging the impossibility of his wife's undertaking such a journey as that which we had arranged for ourselves. But this proposition is at once indignantly rejected. He is one of the strongest and most trusty of my dandy-bearers, and F—— tells him at once that he cannot be spared, adding that as he did not ask leave to bring Fanchyng, he must take the consequences, at the same time magnanimously suggesting that *she* should be sent under escort of two chuprasees to Pemionchi. On seeing Nimboo hesitate at this proposal, F—— hints that the objectionable Nautch-wallah will be left behind with *us*; but even this fails to satisfy him. In common with his race, he possesses, I fancy, a general and undefinable jealousy, for on hearing from one of the men standing by that he would not leave her behind at Darjeeling, C—— enquired of whom he was jealous. 'Eh!' he exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders significantly, 'who can tell?'

We are all the more resolved upon being firm, believing fully that he is only making his wife's incapacity an excuse for obtaining a little holiday and spree at our expense amongst his own people, some of whom, Fanchyng previously informed me, lived within two days' march of Pemionchi. We also know full well that these Hill women are often as strong as men, frequently carrying loads weighing 6 maunds (520 lbs.), and that where Nimboo can go, she can go also.

There has been much discussion as to the manner in which I am to be carried up the mountain—an almost perpendicular precipice of 600 feet,—which must be scaled before the crest of this range can again be reached, and the gradient of which is far too steep for a dandy. I can see the gestures of Catoo as he asserts the impossibility of my being carried at all, whilst Tendook—who is always called in to decide these knotty points—seems equally enthusiastic as to the impossibility of my ascending it on hands and knees. I can understand nothing that they say, for they are talking Lepcha, but watch their movements eagerly, feeling intuitively that, in some way or other, I am the subject of them. Presently I see Tendook hurrying off as fast as his fat legs will carry him, his pigtail flying out at least a yard behind, trying to overtake the coolie laden with the camp chairs, who is just beginning the ascent. Balancing myself upon a tent-peg, I make a little sketch of him on the spot, and soon see him returning with the coolie.

The meaning of this I at once divine. In some extraordinary manner—a profound mystery yet—I am to be carried in a chair. Two coolies are next seen hurrying off with their 'bans,' to cut bamboo canes, and in half an hour's time a little shelf is constructed, and firmly

fastened to the lowest part to rest the feet upon. Watching these impending mysteries with the keenest interest, I see the chair finally strapped to a 'kursing,'—a bamboo frame which these mountaineers invariably use for carrying their loads, whatever these may be, furnished with a circular strap of plaited cane on either side, through which the arms are placed, whilst a third strap passes over the forehead; so that, although the load is carried on the back, it will be seen that the greatest weight is sustained by the head.

I next observe the muscular form of Hatti coming to the fore, and in an instant comprehend that I am to be carried on this giant's back. It must not be supposed, however, that F—— and C—— are not here to give their sanction to these proceedings. On the contrary, C—— mischievously threatens to make a sketch of me as soon as I am fairly impaled, and call it 'Mrs. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque.' At length Tendook announces that all is ready; I take my seat with as grave a countenance as I can assume, am strongly

fastened to the chair like a bundle of merchandise, a strap being made to encircle the waist; Hatti then seats himself on the ground *dos-à-dos*, puts his arms through the kursing-straps, rises with Tendook's and Catoo's assistance, for the first pull is the worst, and we are under weigh. As I am borne aloft, C—— and F——, taking off their hats, shout, 'En r-r-r-route!' and with the whole staff of dandy-wallahs arranged before and behind me in case of accident, we proceed in solemn procession, and I soon feel, by the very uncomfortable motion, that we have begun the ascent.

Then upwards we crawl by jutting rock, through briar and bramble; Hatti, in spite of his great strength, groaning and snorting like a hippopotamus. I had just bidden him stop for an instant's rest, when our progress was forcibly checked by one of the tent-laden coolies in advance, who was loudly calling for help, his load having got jammed between two pieces of rock. As soon as he was extricated, by the united efforts of three men, we resume our climb, and reach the summit in safety.

Once let loose, I shake myself like some wild animal, feeling very thankful again to be on *terra firma*. How appalling it is to look down the deadly precipice whence we had come, and watch the remainder of the coolies toiling up the ascent, sometimes on all fours, at others catching hold of the tough branches of rhododendron. Then the gentlemen come scrambling up like Alpine chamois, only far less nimbly, and obliged frequently to

avail themselves of the help of those of our people who happen to be within their reach.

On looking upwards from our encampment below, we imagined that this summit once gained, we should find ourselves at the highest point; but so deceptive are mountains, as all know who have travelled amongst them, that we still see ridge upon ridge towering above us, stately and shattered undulations of gneiss, whilst everywhere around us lie masses of bold and barren rock. To the west are the nearer mountains of Nepaul; but looking north, the eye wanders over the mighty billows of the Singaleelah Range, bristling with pines.

Having given ourselves and our people rest, and ascertained that none are left behind, we journey on again, hoping to reach our next camping-place, the summit of a lofty mountain, before nightfall. It is impossible to describe the steepness of the climb during a great portion of the day's march, my dandy often being in an almost perpendicular position. Full many a time it gets fixed between fragments of fallen rock, as my bearers carry me

along, the stalwart Bhootias assisting me to alight with a gentleness as if they thought I must break, or in some way or other fall to pieces.

We have now left rhododendrons behind, and a little aromatic species takes their place, growing about twelve inches from the ground, its brown and dry leaves emitting a delicious perfume as we tread them under foot. The scarlet barberry, too, is seen everywhere, and sadly impedes our progress, rendering our climb more laborious than it would otherwise have been, whilst its tiny thorns prove a very weariness to the flesh. Nor is it easy at all times to follow the pathway, for white vapour keeps sweeping over us, not dense enough, however, to exclude the rugged outline of the rocks, which in all their weird beauty may sometimes be dimly seen, but it makes the smooth, lichen-covered stones slippery; and a short distance before me I presently saw a pair of mocassins against a background of grey mist, which threw them out in strong relief, and heard the cries of some one calling lustily for help. Instantly running to the rescue, my bearers found one of the baggage coolies holding on, head downwards, by the roots of a barberry bush, which had become exposed by the washing away of the soil: the poor fellow, having wandered slightly from the track, had fallen, whilst a precipice yawning beneath him, he was unable to change his terrible position unaided.

The character of the scenery now changes rapidly, and in an hour's time, all appearance of mist departing,

the joyous sun shines forth clearly, and Nature once more dries, starches, and gets herself up again. Far down in deep hollows, we observe dead pines lying by scores, whilst here and there a lonely trunk is seen standing, its bare roots showing singular reticulation, and branches covered with a lichen which we have hitherto met with at no other elevation, and which hangs in long delicate threads or filaments. At my request F—— gathers one, and on unwinding it carefully, we find that it measures no less than five yards in length. My bearers inform me that they use this species of lichen to burn in their Temples as incense, mixing it with spices and the wood of the juniper-tree.

We are fast losing all trace of aconite, and in its place the ground is covered with a primrose closely resembling our English flower of the same name, but with petals of delicate pink, and leaves muffled up in little white fur coats of softest texture. The mountains are speckled with these pretty little flowers for miles and miles, our people treading them carelessly under foot at each step. There is also a hardy kind of rose, though not in bloom at this wintry season, and plenty of hips, if there were only birds to eat them, which there are not, and for which Nature, with a prodigality unlike herself, seems to have made useless provision.

We now begin to follow a track marked out with slabs of slate, at distances of about twenty yards, erected, Tendook informs me, by the yâk herdsmen, to enable

them to retrace their steps when snow falls, for they graze their yâks at this elevation during the milder seasons of the year, taking them lower down as winter approaches.

The clouds, which had hidden all outline of the snowy peaks throughout the day's march, now roll away, leaving them for one brief interval to display themselves in all their lonely grandeur; Kinchinjunga becoming gradually depressed and sinking behind nearer mountains as we travel north-west, whilst Kubra and Junnoo gain considerably in importance, although not so high by many thousand feet.

Judging from the ascent we have made since leaving Mount Singaleelah, we cannot be at a much lower altitude than 14,000 feet, but as yet we have experienced none of those sensations so feelingly described by travellers in far lesser heights. And here I must mention that, not only were we so unfortunate as to leave our 'aneroid' behind, or to lose it on the way, as I have stated, but a few days before starting, by a most singular coincidence, an accident befell another instrument which F—— was to have brought to gauge the different elevations, as well as to ascertain the temperature—an accident by which the bulb was broken. We were naturally very greatly distressed at our loss, the more so as to have sent to Calcutta to obtain another would have occupied fully a quarter of his leave; but as we have not come for the purpose of making a 'survey,' but simply to enjoy the

incidents of travel, and the magnificence of the scenes that lie stretched before us, it does not, after all, matter very greatly.

Some of the mountains along this range, however, have been already measured, and, knowing their height, we are enabled to form a pretty fair estimate of the rest; that is to say, within a few hundred feet or so, by observing the ascents and descents closely.

Looking down into a hollow, enclosed by scarped precipices, we again see a few solitary pines, bare of foliage, but covered with those long filaments of lichen which I have before described, and which, having been continually blown by the wind in one direction, like witches' hair, have gradually become frost-bound, and are standing out in the most unnatural positions, some of them suspended horizontally in the very air. Nothing could be more extraordinary than their appearance—the long slender threads hanging out straight, and stiff, and motionless.

Ascending higher, and rounding a rocky bluff, we find ourselves in a narrow gorge, hemmed in by mural precipices, in which are natural caves and slits in the solid rock, the heavy and measured 'tramp,' 'tramp' of my dandy-bearers being echoed at each step. It is the kind of place to make one superstitious.

'*Who's there, who?*' shouted Hatti in Hindustani, pronouncing each word separately and distinctly. In an instant the gorge was filled with muffled and mysterious

voices, as echo answered echo, till the last was scarcely heard, and the cadence died away.

'*I am*,' cried Nautch-wallah. Immediately, in the same language, and along the gorge, and upwards from the chasm, came the clatter of many voices, 'I am, I am,' till it was difficult to help believing there were a number of mocking, mischievous little imps hiding themselves in its fastnesses, or beneath the fallen rocks; and I thought of Lattoo's warning, 'There are wicked spirits in the rocks, mem sahib.'

It was amusing, also, to observe how the baggage coolies, who had previously been following our footsteps at some little distance, now hastened on and closed around us, with a scared expression written in their faces.

'Ha, ha! You are afraid!' exclaimed the courageous and more enlightened Nautch-wallah, in jeering accents, and instantly ran the muffled, mocking laugh, repeated a hundred times, '*Ha, ha! You are afraid!*' which only scared them more than ever.

'You foolish fellows!' I cried, laughing, and addressing the ignorant baggage coolies. 'Do you not hear that it is the echo of your own voices?'

'Nae, mem sahib, nae!' they replied, shaking in their mocassins, their very knees knocking together from sheer fright. 'Don't laugh, they don't like it. They are the spirits calling to us from the rocks, and some accident will surely happen.'

Having now traversed the gorge, we stand on the summit of a bare bleak alp; and oh, how cold it is! biting, nipping, sawing. In spite of my thickly wadded dress I become so chilled and frozen that I am almost lacrymose, something like a tear trickling down my face, and settling half way into an icicle, the only bodily sensation which I am at all capable of realising being that of a violent throbbing in the extreme tip of my nose! Scrambling on a little further, we reach a spot sheltered on all sides by fragments of bare black 'gneiss,' in the middle of which, as in a natural ingle, the cook had not only made a fire, but thinking we might be glad of some refreshment by the way—for our appetites seldom slumber long together in these lofty regions—he had the water in the kettles already boiling, in readiness for any emergency that might arise.

It is a welcome sight; but having heard that frost-bitten members have a way of disintegrating themselves from the general mass, on being brought into a too speedy contact with heat, I keep at a respectful distance from that treacherous element on the present occasion, and sitting down on a stone, my head buried in my lap, begin moralising on the uncomfortableness of all things, and the misery to which flesh is heir, and finish up all by crying myself into comfort. Moral obvious—*Keep at home in your snug houses, and rest satisfied with looking at the mountains from a distance.*

Then gradually drawing nearer to the fire, and ana-

lysing my feelings as I thaw my smarting fingers, I come to the conclusion, that travelling in these inclement heights at this season of the year brings with it keen bodily suffering. But utterly worn out by fatigue and exhaustion, and not much the better for my moralising, I fall asleep, and am at length awakened, I know not how long after, by F——'s kindly voice. He has just overtaken me, and now, kneeling by my side, seems greatly distressed at my giving in thus, on our first day of real difficulty.

Halting here, we have 'tiffin,' and reach camping-ground at six o'clock. The men, notwithstanding the slippery state of the soil, came on bravely to-day, and are all up, and busily pitching tents.

The fog, which again overtook us an hour ago, prevents our seeing the view from this spot, which we instinctively feel must be very fine. But I am far too weary and tired to pay much heed to the beauties of scenery, even had any been visible; and as soon as the tents are ready, taking refuge in mine, I throw myself down upon my mattress, now placed on the cold hard ground, the little iron bedsteads having been sent on to Pemionchi, with the rest of the heavy baggage.

F——, on the contrary, is in the highest spirits, the violent exercise of climbing having kept him warm; and the only sensation of which he complains, is one common to most hardy mountaineers with a good digestion. I can both see and hear him, as I lie beneath the canvas, talking to a little knot of men who have assembled round the

camp-fire to listen to him, for he is regarded by them all with much affection, keeping them alive with anecdote and song. C——, however, is grave as a rule, possessing one of those worn and thoughtful faces which so many do who have lived even a few years in a tropical climate; but he possesses, nevertheless, a keen sense of quiet enjoyment, and even of the ludicrous sometimes, and is in every respect a most intellectual and pleasant companion. And I am not sure that one who is grave is not the kind of companion one wants amid these austere solitudes, where much laughter seems out of place.

I am not permitted to remain in peace and quiet long, for F—— soon comes in, insisting on my rousing myself, and 'eating dinner like a Christian.' It is useless to argue that I am not hungry, and only covet to be left alone. Arguments fail in making any impression upon him whatever, and finding that continued obstinacy would vex him, I decide upon taking Mrs. Chick's advice to Mrs. Dombey, and 'make an effort.'

After dinner we sit round the fire in the open air as usual—a luxury we cannot expect many more times, as wood of the larger kind grows more scarce at each march, and we must then be contented to sit inside our tents, over the stoves.*

At a little distance, on another ledge or shelf of the mountain, stands our guide, the central figure of a number of men; and the glare of the fire, lighting up his tall form, now clad in scarlet, together with the sinister

expression he always wears, makes him look wonderfully like Mephistopheles in the 'garden scene.' Summoning him, we make a careful examination of the scabbard of his knife, which is of the most beautiful workmanship and design, made in Nepaul. F—— offers him 50 rupees (5*l.*) for it; he declines to part with it, however, upon any terms. Still he seems disposed to be communicative, and to make himself agreeable in other ways. But as he cannot speak much Hindustani, nor we Nepaulese, which is a dialect of Hindee, conversation, as may be readily imagined, is of a rather spasmodic and unsatisfactory character. The countenances of the Nepaulese are, as a rule, very pleasing, if not actually handsome, and they are a plucky, daring, and warlike tribe, greatly skilled in the use of these knives, by the aid of which they have not only withstood Sepoys under the command of British officers, but on one occasion British bayonets also.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DEODUNGA.

'Teach me, by this stupendous scaffolding,
Creation's golden steps, to climb to Thee.'

All is quiet at dawn, not a sound breaking the stillness of Nature. Much refreshed by my night's sleep, and feeling quite able for the day's march further north, I hastily dress, and throwing a rug around me, determine to face the cold even at this early hour, and peep out. The western horizon is hidden by lofty and sullen crags, which frown down upon me black as Erebus, and so near do they appear that they seem literally suspended over my head, creating a painful sensation of oppression. The whole world, at least that part which is visible to me, is wrapped in profoundest gloom—a gloom infinitely more oppressive than total darkness, for none of the asperities of mountain and rock are softened by the herbage that is seen to clothe them by day with a garment that makes even their savage outlines fair and comely to look upon.

I feel fearfully subdued amid this dread magnificence and vast chaos, for there is nothing tender and loving in the face of grand, glorious, majestic Nature at this hour.

Such an aspect must it have worn in the world's long night, when, darkness brooding over it, it was without form and void. But very solemn and wonderful is it to watch Form grow gradually out of Chaos, and see things take shape one after another, and note how the void begins to *live*, as points of colour reveal themselves. How that black chasm opens and displays its frozen waterfall! and that rock, before so grim, hovering over me like a Nemesis, is seen to be covered with an exquisite garment of lichens, in colours of red, and white, and orange.

Beneath, at my very feet, lies a valley of desolation, hemmed in by a wall of micaceous and tempest-shattered peaks, and beetling crags, and above these an undulating sweep of crystal—the snowy range of Nepaul, looking marvellously near, and with that terrible beauty of death-like repose, which precedes sunrise, as it follows upon sunset.

Whilst I stand alone amidst this infinitude of Nature, the sun, beginning to ascend on his triumphal car of crimson cloud, tips the highest pinnacle with an aerial glory. In an instant it dawned upon me that I was at last gazing on Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world. I could not be mistaken. There it stood, like a stupendous barrier, shutting out the west, with austere sublimity, till the glorious sun arises. Then, the whole scene changing, it became a mass of quivering, shimmering light, in every shade of opal, save in the shadows which, bathed in deepest sapphire, seemed to sanctify and lend a pathos to the whole.

Hastening back to my tent I snatch up my block and colours, which are always in readiness, so that no time may be lost, when there is any particularly evanescent effect of light and shade to be jotted down, or any sketch to be taken on the march. Then ascending a knoll at some little distance above our encampment, whence I surmised I should have a more uninterrupted view, I looked across upon Mount Everest, which appeared to be floating in a sea of soft grey mist, out of which rose a rocky promontory with a castellated summit, all very distant, yet seeming inconceivably near in this pure atmosphere: and what a magnificent and graceful sweep of snow it is! From this spot it is, indeed, a superb and overwhelming vision of beauty, for the lower peaks of the range being excluded by rocky bluffs and bold headlands, it stands alone in stately, solitary majesty. It is wonderful, too, what a selfish gratification one feels when looking at an object which has never yet been either photographed or painted—a kind of exultation I may call it. And how my heart throbbed as I gazed at it!

Just below this place a species of *coniferæ* is growing, quite unlike the pines at a lower elevation, resembling juniper, but small and stunted, and almost bare. A sweep of them extends along the side of the alp upon which I am sketching, though at some hundred feet beneath me, their tempest-torn apices just showing themselves at the limits of the region of their growth. None of the other mountains, however, exhibit the faintest sign of vegeta-

tion except that of the leafless barberry, which grows in bushes about a foot and a half from the ground.

'Sunrise on the (Swiss) Alps is magnificent,' wrote an English traveller in America, lately; 'but sunrise on the Sierra is sublime! for here are the wilder solitudes, and here the grandeur and impressiveness of the remote New World, far away beyond the centre of civilisation.' And if true of the Sierra, how infinitely more so of sunrise on the Himalaya, which are almost twice their height, and whose solitudes have never yet, and never will be, trodden by the foot of man!

Clad in fur from head to foot, I managed to sketch hurriedly for an hour, accomplishing a little picture in which the form and colour of the mountains were sufficiently indicated to enable me to complete it at a later period. The annexed is a very unworthy representation of that glorious scene, for it lacks the metallic lustre of the snow, which, however, I believe, cannot be reproduced by the most practised hand, or indeed by any human instrumentality whatever.

Still sketching away in a perfect heaven of wonder and delight, I am suddenly brought to earth by F——, who, having discovered my whereabouts, and folding my rug more closely round my shoulders, enquires whether I have not gone mad, to remain thus in the cold before the sun is well up. He, too, is wonderstruck by the scene, but, less enthusiastic than I am, thinks it will 'keep,' his anxiety on my behalf just then outweighing

whatever æstheticism might be lurking in his composition at that early hour; and hurrying me away, he wakes the echoes unromantically by shouting in a Stentorian voice for '*gurm pānee*' (warm water).

In a few seconds the whole camp is astir. Fires which had not quite gone out all night are a-blaze again, and C——'s voice, proceeding from the depths of his rugs, reaches us in complaining and deprecatory accents, demanding to be informed by what right he is thus disturbed at such an unearthly hour. In a short time F—— stands over me with some horrid potion, composed, I verily believe, of coffee with cognac in it, which he insists upon my drinking, whilst I ask him if he thinks anyone *could* be so abominably material as to catch cold amidst such scenes! It was fortunate, at any rate, that I had had the courage to rise as early as I did, for a cloud has this moment ascended, and obscured the whole face of the sky.

Solemnly munching hard sea-biscuit, while F—— smokes his early cigar, I cautiously broach my intention of starting for the heights as soon as my dandy-bearers are ready, hoping therefrom to make a more careful sketch of Mount Everest. But nothing, not even coaxing this time, will induce him to give his consent. In vain I urge that 'life is short, and art is long:' he remains perfectly obdurate, scarcely deigning to make me any reply, but seeming wholly absorbed in his cigar. My cause, I suspect, has been materially weakened by the want of

pluck I displayed on the march yesterday; he begins to fear I shall knock up altogether, and is evidently determined to curb my enthusiasm if possible. Importunity and 'agitation,' however, at length prevail, as they always will over those who love peace and quiet. So summoning Fanchyng, and rolling and bundling me up in shawls and rugs like an Egyptian mummy, he permits me to start; and, with the usual body-guard, I am soon being carried up the very steep path above our encampment, if that can be called one over which my men scramble, now knee-deep in tough brown grass, rigid with frost, at other times over thin slabs of gneiss, very dangerous to the feet of those who do not wear mocassins; the sun making the portions of mica, which dot the mountains far and near, glitter like cascades, from which, at a distance, it is not easy to distinguish them.

How delightful to climb these wild gorges in the clear morning light, and watch the crystal beads, which imprison each twig and lichen stem, melt into shining drops as the sun grows warm! Coming on thus early, when the sky is undimmed by mist, I see much more than F—— and C——, who lose sights which thrill me with wonder and astonishment. But theirs is an unavoidable detention, it being seldom that we can induce the coolies to strike tents and be ready for the march before ten o'clock at the earliest.

We are now beyond the region of vegetation, with

the exception of the tough grass I have before spoken of, and a minute species of red lichen, the *Parmelia miniata*, which Hooker assures us is the most 'Arctic, Antarctic, and Alpine' which exists; and the world looks old, so very old here, Time has made such wrinkles in its dear old face. Everything bears marks of a hoary antiquity, and one seems to have been suddenly carried back into some earlier period of its history. In these scarce terrestrial altitudes, far removed from the strife of men, we seem to breathe an atmosphere not of earth. We are above the region where men are born, and live, and suffer, and agonise, and die; above principalities and powers, and all things temporal. How small appear even the destinies of nations! What to us are their rise and fall?

It is utterly hopeless to convey to the minds of those who have never travelled in the interior of the Himalaya, the almost fierce majesty and barren grandeur of Nature in this great lonely land. I have visited most of the mountainous districts of Europe, but they give not the faintest idea of the wild desolation of these regions at 14,000, or 15,000 feet, commanding views of peaks twice their height again.

It is within the portals of these sublime mountains that one realises of a truth, and in a way unintelligible to those who have not lived amongst them, the Unseen and Infinite. He exists in their profound silence, and in the antique mystery of all around. At such times one seems

to enter into dreary fellowship with them, their silence becomes eloquence, and they speak to the heart with a sublimer utterance than human lips can devise. Why do we often feel such kinship with Nature? Is it not that the Great Unseen, revealing Himself through this pure medium—the glorious embodiment of Himself—is making us realise more fully, that we are one with Him, and them, and He with us?

> Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
> Of me, and of my soul, and I of them?
>
> *Childe Harold.*

There are some things which to look upon make one better; and as I stand in these vast solitudes I do so with bent knee and bowed head, as becomes one who is in the *felt* presence of the Invisible.

A perpetual wonder to me are these stupendous Hills, and I often feel embued with a wild eagle spirit, and long to soar and soar until I reach their very summits. The sea is a great Teacher, and the sky a volume in which God's own language is written in stars; but these mountains, no less types of solidity and endurance beyond all Time, impress me with a sense of majesty and divinity above all else.

Having climbed a considerable height and got behind the steep ridge that effectually shut out the Sikkim snows from our place of encampment, I behold Pundeem again towering above us, and I certainly never saw it look so superb. No other snow-clad peak is visible, for we have

left all panoramic views behind, and only see them now in single grandeur, the greater part of the range being hidden by rocky precipices, upon which no living thing but hardy lichen even attempts to grow. Journeying on

we came upon rocks that presented the most startling and singular form, assuming the appearance of quaintly sculptured faces, which from a little distance one could easily imagine to be the heads of ancient Titans, keeping watch over the world beneath.

Gneiss, one of the oldest of the primary rocks, is the predominating structure in the Himalaya, being an aggregated mass consisting of felspar, quartz, and mica, but differing from granite in being schistose or slaty. We are now surrounded by one chaotic heap of stupendous blocks of this formation in every fantastic shape and position, leading one to believe that at one period of the world's history there must have been some vast explosion, and that the rocky surface of the earth, broken into fragments, must have been shot up into the air and fallen again, or else that it was due to one of those 'berg falls' of which one sees the result in the beautiful Swiss Alps,—a mighty crag shattered, loosened, crumbling, and then falling at one burst—an avalanche of solid rock, occurring probably centuries ago, probably in prehistoric time. No one saw the crash, and the knowledge lies buried deep within themselves, for who can unravel the great 'riddle of the rocks?' But there is to my mind something terribly and inexpressibly thrilling in the utter *loneliness* of this stupendous convulsion of Nature, which operates on so gigantic a scale in these the vastest mountains of the globe.

It is now impossible that I can be carried in my dandy, the passage between the madder-tinted blocks of gneiss being frequently too narrow. We have also to watch carefully for the newly upturned soil, our only indication of the pathway, which, once lost, we might find hard to regain. Pausing to rest, I look above and

around, in profoundest awe and wonder. A vast ocean of naked débris, as far as eye can reach, lies spread before me, with nothing living to rob it of its gloom; whilst to the right, barricading everything to the very sky, rises a mountain wall, down whose face huge rounded boulders lie scattered here and there, as though it had been 'weeping tears of stone.' What pigmies we all appear! Panchyng, as she sits alpenstock in hand, pensively tracing her thoughts on a piece of lichen-covered stone, looking like a weird little Arcadian shepherdess through the wrong end of a telescope. Finding that my bearers are much exhausted by their climb, the chuprassees give to each a small quantity of rum, which F—— requested them to bring with them for the purpose in case of need.

A spirit of some sort has evidently moved F—— and C—— to make an unusually early start, for the continuous noise of hammering, inseparable from the pitching and striking of tents, comes borne along the gorge and echoed from rock to rock, till I reach a point whence I can descry our camp in all the bustle and excitement of a move; and a very pretty sight it is to look down upon those fairy tents, dwarfed into microscopic atoms far far beneath.

As we ascend still higher, and emerge from behind a jutting rock that excluded it from our view, suddenly there is a loud and simultaneous exclamation of 'Deodunga! Deodunga! Gaurisankar!' from my attendants, all apostrophising it in their different dialects, as the

magnificent spires of Mount Everest again burst unexpectedly upon the view.

Halting here, I determined from this spot if possible to make a more complete sketch of the Imperial Deodunga ('Mount of God'), although even the attempt seemed little short of sacrilege, for it possesses a 'grace and gleam,' far beyond the reach of Art, which can only be realised by the inner eye, and can neither be portrayed nor described. I prefer using the Thibetan to the English name of this glorious mountain, because the natives, who regard it with deep awe and reverence, seem to have had a fuller and deeper appreciation of it —the purest and noblest type on earth of the Almighty Architect—when they named it Deodunga. I had all along been almost dreading to see it, for, as Kinchinjunga had slightly disappointed me on nearer approach, becoming depressed and partially hidden by nearer mountains, I feared, as some writer has expressed it, the extinction of another of those lights which shine along one's pathway, but go out like a snuff the moment one becomes within reach of the fulfilment of one's hopes. But here I am, after long and patient waiting—for it was the dream of my childhood to see this nearest point of earth to heaven—gazing at it with bodily eyes, yet never having conceived anything so glorious, so vast, so Godlike. How unutterably ethereal they look, 'those silent pinnacles of aged snow!' There is a purity not of earth in that solemn stately pile, and a beauty

indefinable, which only Turner, that greatest of all modern painters—so much abused by 'common folk' because so little understood—could represent. *He* saw a divine light and glory over things that material minds never realise or see—a something *felt* rather than actually seen, a something which is spiritually discerned.

Turner's was a mind in which Nature called up strong emotion, and he painted what he felt; and the more I live amongst its sublime sanctuaries, the more convinced do I become that there *is* a something real in it, to which the whole being of some persons responds, but which is nevertheless wholly unreal to others. As I sit gazing on this magnificent mountain, so earnest and pathetic in its great loneliness, a passion of sunlight bursts over it, and I feel more than ever how feeble is Art in its power of reproducing Nature, and I close my easel with a humbled and broken spirit.

A faint white mist now begins to rise out of the valley below Deodunga, and, gradually ascending, becomes a thick cloud, until in a few minutes everything is as much a thing of the past as if it had never been.

We fondly hoped that we had risen above cloudland; but that happy region seems nowhere to exist in the Himalaya, which appear determined we shall have little more than momentary glimpses of them.

My people had already lighted a fire for themselves some paces off; and when I ordered another to be instantly made for myself, some half a dozen fellows were seen

scrambling down the gorge in quest of brambles. Soon returning, they succeeded in creating one out of the little twigs and branches of the prickly barberry. It is amusing to observe how nimbly these mountaineers run in and out and over the rocks when they have no loads to carry: in half an hour's time a whole heap of brambles is collected, and a fire not only kindled but blazing away, sending forth columns of smoke, over which I sit and choke, feeling that, like the Soubah, my

complexion is gradually growing mellow and beautiful, by the daily process of smoke-drying to which it is subjected.

Little Goboon came on with me, as one of my body-guard to-day. Tendook, for some cause or other having been detained at the camp, was prevented from accompanying me as usual. There is a mixture of girlishness and manliness about this lad that is perfectly bewitching. He

must have been told by some one—Tendook probably—how much I admired him, for whenever I catch his eye he blushes and averts his face, with a conscious half-pleased look that amuses me immensely.

So thoroughly wetting is this mountain mist, which increases each moment, that not only are our fires almost extinguished by it, but my outer garments saturated, and I began to have some slight anxiety lest the camp should not be able to follow the pathway. I had no actual fears of their ultimately reaching me, as the newly upturned soil of our Sappers corps could be easily followed, if they only watched its leadings a little carefully. My chief apprehension was rather lest, in a paroxysm of hunger, F—— and C—— should set-to and devour the 'tiffin'! Still I sat watching and waiting patiently, whilst the mist skimmed past, listening for the first approach of footsteps. It was so long ago I heard them striking tents, that surely they ought to have overtaken me by this time.

'Do you think they will ever find us?' I cried, summoning to my side Fanchyng, for whom I begin to feel a kind of affection, not, I am afraid, from any qualities in herself that are particularly interesting, but, like the Prisoner of Chillon with his rats, an affection entirely *faute de mieux*, and simply because she is the only ray of womankind amongst such a wilderness of men.

'Eh, yes!' she replied; 'why not? the Mem sahib is nervous.'

I do not know how long I waited, having left my watch

behind, together with other things which belong to civilisation; but suspense made it seem an hour, when I heard at last the welcome sound of voices. They were coming then, at least some of our camp, and the gentlemen no doubt, having seen all on before them, would immediately follow. But still I waited another weary while, fixing my eyes in the direction of the pathway, vainly endeavouring to penetrate the dense mist that surrounded me, and expecting each moment to see some dark form emerge; yet they did not come, and all sound of voices *gradually died away.*

Then suddenly a terrible thought seized me. They had no doubt come within some distance, had probably traversed the gorge above our late encampment, whence the sound of their voices ascended, as sound *does* ascend, and then, misled by the fog, had lost sight of the path, and might at this moment be wandering farther and farther from me.

Now this would have been a fitting occasion for hysterics—*high strikes*, as F—— calls them—they would have come in effectively here; but I am not given to such demonstrations, so sitting down, I quaked and trembled silently beneath my waterproof, getting wetter and wetter each moment.

My situation to all appearance was a frightful one. Every possibility rose before me, as is invariably the case at such times; at last I sprang to my feet in real mental agony. If they had indeed lost their way, they

might wander on for days without finding us in this dense fog, or even should it clear, still, having once deviated from the track, they could not soon recover it in such a wilderness of rock; and cut off from all supplies of food and shelter, I might verify the predictions of those who intimated the probability of my leaving my bones behind, to whiten on some mountain top.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WE CONSUME OUR BREAKFAST, TOGETHER WITH OUR OWN SMOKE.

SUCH, however, was not destined to be my fate—not yet at any rate—for Hatti, who had gone off in the direction in which the camp must come, supposing they had not mistaken the route, now returned, saying he could hear the sound of approaching footsteps; and I soon recognised the magnificent proportions of Tendook, who came scrambling along in breathless haste, having—good old fellow—anticipated that I should feel anxious. At that moment I think I could have embraced him heartily had he not been so completely out of breath, rendering such action on my part perilous to his equilibrium. When he had recovered himself sufficiently, and not before, he gave me the delightful assurance that all would soon follow.

The voices I heard therefore must have been those of Tendook and one of the baggage coolies, which, although sounding within fifty yards of us, must in reality have been a great distance off, as Tendook did not himself overtake us till fully half an hour afterwards. I had

previously heard how near sound occasionally appears in a fog at these altitudes, and the many voices that now reach us—indicating the gradual approach of the camp—seem surprisingly so, although Tendook assures me they cannot yet have begun the ascent of this mountain.

Our men at length come straggling up by twos and threes. First arrives the culinary establishment—the cook and kitmutgars, followed by the coolie whose mission it is to carry the pots, kettles, and *batterie de cuisine* generally, and whom we have named 'Sprot.' A very gipsy-like figure he makes, wrapped in his blanket, the handles sticking out of his basket and keeping up a constant rattle.

By the time F—— and C—— come up, breakfast is ready, which, sitting over the fire, we consume, together with our own smoke, and looking down from these heights, as from Mount Olympus, we feel like Celestials in the city of the gods. What a comfort it is to us, who are always hungry, that the Greeks permitted them to eat like mortals! We are partaking of our repast with our usual resignation, when Pugla-wallah and little Rags present themselves to ask for medicine. F—— gives them all a dole of rum regularly now at the end of each

day's march; but for the benefit of the *sick* he has invented an especially ingenious compound of rum and quinine, making these ingredients into a comforting drink by adding hot water and sugar; and although it may not be found in the *Pharmacopœia*, it is a remarkably fine mixture notwithstanding, and, as might be expected, patients daily increase.

Wishing much to know the position of Jongli, Tendook enquires from the Guide which mountain it is, and then makes a wonderful little model of the surrounding country with dry earth and sand, as I sit idly by, and points it out to me, dimly visible in a north-easterly direction, apparently about sixteen miles away as a bird would fly. Its elevation is 14,500 feet, but it certainly looks from this distance considerably below us.

The messengers whom C—— despatched to the Kajee of Yangting have not yet overtaken us as we expected. Surely he must have detained them; matters already begin to look serious. Five sheep are left, however, and these were purchased by our host for our own exclusive benefit; but he has promised one to the camp to-night, which has cheered them greatly. At all hazards we must now travel onwards, having more chance of finding food whither we are going, than by returning whence we came, as each march brings us nearer to the next point, where we hope to find supplies awaiting us. Moreover, as we make *short* marches, we have great hopes of its still following us from Yangting.

After leaving this spot we followed a narrow pathway, formed, as we supposed, by the yâk herdsmen, along which, at distances of about fifty yards, upright slabs of gneiss, like small telegraph posts, were placed, such as we had seen elsewhere, to mark the track over this wilderness when snow falls, and we almost felt that we had again reached the haunts of man. It was an intense gratification to recognise even these small tokens of the existence of human life!

From this track several diverged, and across all, save one, the Guide had placed slight barriers, in the shape of brambles and stones, to prevent those behind from following them, as also to indicate the right pathway to the men who may even yet, we hope, overtake us with food. To enable them to catch us up, we have hitherto, as I have said, made shorter marches than we should otherwise have done. But I fancy it will soon be a question with us, whether we should not rather relinquish all idea of its ever reaching us from that quarter, and make forced marches to the next spot to which it was arranged that food should be sent.

Whilst bivouacking opposite Deodunga, my bearers occupied themselves in constructing a dandy for me, of a different kind from my own, by slinging one of the dhurries, or tent rugs, on to a long bamboo pole, the loop of which formed the seat, the knees resting on one side of the pole and the head on the other, the kind of thing F—— wished me to travel in, and which, if I mistake not, I

must have described elsewhere. It is a comfortable arrangement enough over a good pathway, but in such rough cross-country travelling as this, nothing could be worse, and I soon discarded it for my old friend the Bareilly dandy; for my feet dangling over the sling, and coming in contact with the sharp pieces of slate and stone through which my men scrambled, got severely knocked and battered.

We are all by this time suffering, more or less, from the rarefied state of the atmosphere: I principally from intermittent beating of the heart and palpitation, and F—— from a compressed sensation across the brows and drumming in the ears.

On our way we meet with a small and curious species of heather, with foliage very rigid, its little brown and shrivelled flowers trembling with the cold. Ah! those who are fond of heather should see it on the moors of North Devon, where it grows as I have never seen it elsewhere, not in shaggy tufts, but in thick bushes, as though it loved the soil, and where with it blooms the gorse, whose yellow spikes contrast wonderfully with the rich purple of the heather. These moors are Nature's garden in August and September, and are one vast expanse of delicious colour, in every gradation of yellow, orange, purple, and green, which, standing out against the liquid azure of the sky, form a picture I would gladly travel far again to see.

We now wind round the declivity of a mountain,

over piles of huge slabs of slate, which have been slowly toppling down for ages, and which cover its surface from top to bottom. One could scarcely help imagining that some giant must have a mine near its summit, and that these stones are shale, which he has been shooting out of it for centuries. All are sharp and angular: some lying on their sides; whilst others, standing erect, look like tombstones, upon which long epitaphs, and blurred records of the past, are written in blood-red lichen stains. Others again appropriately assume the form of gigantic coffins, for a deadly precipice yawns beneath; and the weather having discoloured them in grotesque patterns here and there, they sometimes look as though they were making faces at us, as we clamber along. So enormous, too, are these unchiseled blocks of slate, that the line of baggage coolies, before and behind, look like a procession of tiny puppets.

Skirting these mountains we are often surprised, even in elevations such as these, to find the heat quite oppressive from the air currents, which ascend from the steamy tropical valleys thousands of feet below. We have all too by this time learnt where precipices are, even in the densest fog, from the peculiar feeling of the air.

Our day's march at an end, we sit over the tent stove, and have a long talk with C—— of things present and eternal, even of the mysteries of life and death—subjects far beyond our ken. Presently a pitiful object was seen standing without, in the person of the coolie to whom

is entrusted a no less precious load than that of my sketching materials. The poor fellow was speechless, his hands were clasped, his hair stood almost erect, whilst fear and trembling bristled through every thread of his coarse gaberdine.

'What would the *Sahib logue* do to him?' He had lost everything but my easel and a large and almost useless drawing board; my colour box and block, on which was a pet sketch more highly finished than usual, having slid out of the rope with which he had tied the whole to his 'kursing,' were all gone, gone he knew not whither. The brushes he thought he *might* be able to make out of his own hair, but the paints and the *taswir*, ah! who amongst them could write mountains and trees like the Mem sahib! *She* would forgive him, however; but the *Sahib logue!*— and here he burst out crying.

Dreading some fearful punishment from the avenging deities in the persons of the *Sahib logue*, the poor fellow was in an agony; but I consoled him by saying that I had not only more paints and drawing paper, but I hoped brushes also; and as for the *taswir*, there were plenty of others still left to be done, and he might dry his eyes, for the *Sahib logue* would not only not do anything to him, but should never hear of the circumstance at all.

It was too late in the evening to go back and try to find it; but the next morning, on leaving my tent, I saw a spongy-looking substance being dried over the fire.

This turned out to be my block, which they had sought for at earliest dawn, and which, having been thickly coated with hoar-frost during the night, had become unglued at the edges, by the so-called process of drying, and was now almost soaked to pieces, and little better than a jelly. I perceived that our tents also were covered with a thick powdering of ice-crystals in arabesque patterns, and the little black sheep had also turned white under the same process. No food having overtaken us, we have been compelled to alter our route. Rice is diminishing ominously, and there is only a small quantity of bhoota left and four sheep. This being the case, we have decided, after much anxious deliberation, to travel over the Dumgongla Pass only, leaving that of Kanglanamo to the north-west, and by striking off due east to a mountain called Yangpoong, arrive at Jongli by quite another way.

This is a source of no small disappointment, but the only safe plan, for, by travelling in a more northerly direction, and getting into deeper snow with the mere *hope* of food reaching us, would be absolute madness. We have no right to risk the lives of our people, even were we disposed to hazard our own. Once at Yangpoong, should supplies meanwhile not overtake us, we shall not be far from a village, which we must sack in case of need.

With the exception of a few hours' hard climbing at the beginning of the march to-day, we have been gradually descending till we come once more upon the

little barberry, at this elevation destitute of its once blossom-like leaves, and reach a rocky defile, whose crags are shattered by centuries of frosts, or rather æons, for centuries are but as a day that is told in contemplating these old world formations. Our way through its grim portals lay over immense piles of slate, split into thin fragments; then ascending again, we saw evidences of man's existence in narrow tracks worn by yâk herdsmen, and came to a path broader than the rest, leading in a north-easterly direction; and here again a pile of stones was placed, to prevent our traversing it. It led over barren moors, and somehow had a frequented look; whilst the one we were to pursue presented a weary waste, which made my very heart sink within me.

'*That*, Mem sahib,' said my little dandy-bearer, who always tells me the names of the mountains, pointing in the direction whither the pathway led,—'that is the way to Yangpoong. Mem sahib never reach Yangpoong by *this* way.' Whereupon I told him that, as our Guide came here every summer, he must surely know the way.

'Nae, Mem sahib! but this path leads to the White Mountains, but that to mountains where green things grow. Yangpoong is not a high mountain; men live there in the summer months'—words I thought nothing of when they were spoken, but very much some time after.

'When persons take a guide, they do not go the road they think best themselves,' I replied, 'but leave it to him to direct; otherwise what is the use of a guide?'

Whereupon the little man, feeling quite snubbed, said no more about it, but followed my dandy in silence.

As we look above, below, around, all is one painful scene of desolation. Huge boulders, fallen from the heights, lie

poised one upon another in a way that makes one shudder and hold one's breath, lest the slightest vibration of the air should hurl them down upon us; and Hatti tells me how they fall during the 'rains,' and that then it is highly dangerous to travel in these regions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW WE DINE AT 14,000 FEET ABOVE THE LEVEL OF THE SEA.

We have seen no trace of the existence of human life, apart from that of our camp, since meeting the fur-clad man leading the procession of salt-laden goats at Soubahgoom, nor a vestige of habitation; and travelling hour after hour in these desolate wilds, so full of strange weird mystery, one feels greatly impressed with the profundity of the solitude, which begets within one a feeling akin to awe.

Some persons seem born with a physical affinity to Nature, of whom I think I must be one, for I love to be alone in these vast primæval solitudes, where words seem out of place; and it is with no human form near me, that I best love to hold communion with them. We sometimes ask ourselves what right we have to intrude upon this great lonely land, left unpeopled since the creation of man, a loneliness which our presence almost seems to desecrate. The complete absence of every form of life is unutterably solemn. Nature for once seems untrue to her own laws, for we are surrounded by a great void.

Not a bird or insect hovers in the air, and we feel alone in the presence of the Great Spirit.

As yet we have not reached the region of snow; but journeying onwards by a very gradual yet perceptible ascent, we get into the land of icicles, and the farther we proceed, with a firmer grip does the cruel frost set his iron hand upon everything. All Nature whitens and hardens, and wears a chilling aspect. It is a land of desolation quite beyond my feeble power to describe; a silent world of ice; a silence which grows more and more absolute; a silence truly felt, and one which makes itself articulate solely by the faint echo of our footsteps.

There is no colour in anything. Red lichen and brown rock and upturned soil, under the chilling breath of the ice-king, are all alike clothed in a garment of white, and present one monotonous tone to the eye, save when the feeble sun, lighting up the ocean of tiny crystals, makes them sparkle like a thousand prisms; and then we truly feel that we have been transported to some fairy country. In these regions the very sun himself looks pale and frozen, and shines as with an effort, whilst each blade of yellow grass, which hangs over the stern and ancient rocks, has its frozen tear.

We are to reach the summit of another mountain to-day if possible; and as our Guide—in whom, having been provided by the Soubah, we have perfect confidence, and to whose direction we have left our entire route—

tells us we have some very severe climbing before us, we are to start early, and must quit our tents at once.

A source of profound amusement to our men along the way arises in gathering icicles which hang like stalactites over everything, and slyly thrusting them down the backs of those who happen to be in advance. This is followed by shrieks from the victims, and shouts of laughter from the rest, till all engage in the guerilla warfare. Even the grave and solemn Tendook, laying aside his dignity for the time, gives himself up to this invigorating exercise, which seems as irresistible to him as snow-balling to an English schoolboy.

The ground here is so covered with fragments of mica schist, as well as slate, that the poor fellows get terribly lamed, few having any protection for the feet, the mocassins which they possessed on starting from home having worn out long ago. Now and again they may be seen sitting down and binding up their wounds, and then journeying on as cheerily as before.

Whatever happens to us now is ascribed to the effects of elevation. One has a splitting headache; it is elevation! Another has a stitch in his side; it is elevation! A third loses his hat or head-gear; it is elevation! A fourth loses his temper; it is only the elevation! But whatever else we may happen to lose, we never by any chance lose our appetites.—May I be forgiven for alluding to this weakness of the flesh so often!—On these, alas! no amount of elevation makes the slightest impres-

sion; for although we all do undoubtedly suffer more or less from the rarefied state of the atmosphere, we find that when we halt for our mid-day meal, we watch its preparation with undiminished interest, and partake of it, when ready, with appetites that would astonish everyone but ourselves. Our feasts in these days of severe mountaineering remind one of those of the Roman emperors. In fact, we live in a chronic and humiliating condition of absolute and unmitigated hunger.

On our march to-day, we halted for luncheon on the narrow ridge of a precipice. Beneath us a little procession of white clouds, travelling westward, dappled a miniature valley 12,000 feet below with alternate light and shade; and we looked down upon pines, dwarfed into the veriest Dutch toys, thence into depths reeking with moisture, and choked with tropical vegetation. In this clear air, distant objects may be seen with a distinctness perfectly marvellous, and by the aid of a field-glass we could follow the course of a river, winding its way along to the far-off sea, not a drop of it the same as it was an hour ago, in strange contrast to these immovable and eternal rocks under which we sat, and upon which years will make no change except that wrought by natural denudation — the gradual wearing away caused by Time's own footsteps. The verdant valley was very beautiful, and wondrous altogether was the view that lay stretched at our feet; whilst we poor freezing creatures, surrounded by icicles, were vainly

endeavouring to shelter ourselves from the piercing cold behind a rock, as we ate æsthetic, not to say *frozen* bacon, and drank 'æsthetic tea,' doing our little best to be grimly happy amongst these new wonders. But it is somewhat difficult to enjoy or see beauty in anything, when a pain in each shoulder, like the perpetual gnawing of a hungry rat,

ceases neither day nor night; when sudden twinges in the sciatic nerve, like a rusty screw being driven into you, almost make you scream aloud; and when every one of your muscles seems tied up in hard knots, and each to be pulling the wrong way.

Before continuing the march, F—— doled out a small quantity of rum to each man, which is medicine very precious in these days; and there begins to be such a drain upon our supply, that he has great fears it will not hold out much longer. Under these grave considerations, he has lately taken upon himself to dilute it without their

knowledge; and the proportion of the inebriating quality becomes small by degrees, and so beautifully less each time, that ere long it will doubtless subside into *aqua pura*; and if so, we only hope that, like everything else, it may be ascribed to the effects of 'elevation!'

Our beverage, however, is invariably tea; and let me recommend all mountain travellers to try it, and I venture to say they will soon discard every stimulant in its favour, for when weary and fatigued, it refreshes both body and mind, and sets one up, and pulls one together again, to a degree that nothing else can.

We now descend a mountain by a very steep gradient, which occupies about two hours, and once more find ourselves in the midst of the aromatic rhododendron, emitting its delicious perfume, and silently performing the functions of its growth, with no human eye to see it, till one almost wondered at the waste of sweetness which Nature had scattered with such lavish hand. Scrambling down the mountain-side, Fanchyng stoops to pluck its leaves, till her skirt, which she forms into an apron for the purpose, is full of them. She tells me she is gathering them to make a pillow for her little brother, who has fever, and to whom she seems devotedly attached; upon which I ask her if they are considered a remedy, but am answered in the negative. She only wants them for the perfume, she says, which is lasting and refreshing 'when persons are sick;' adding sadly, 'and we often use them to cover the dead.'

Arriving at the end of the descent, we cross a broad valley, through which the dry bed of a river winds, and ascending the heights on the other side, again reach cold latitudes. And we are now not far below the line of perpetual congelation; hard beds of nevé, easily distinguishable through a field-glass, from newly fallen snow, lying in

the hollows of the mountains above us. During the latter part of our day's march we came upon it fourteen inches deep. This snow, having lately fallen, and not having had time to harden, rendered climbing very laborious, and the feet getting clogged with it, many falls, which even F—— did not escape, were the consequence; but the 'burra sahib,' rightly imbued with a sense of his

own majesty, took care, by being well on in advance of us, that we should have no opportunity of witnessing any such little humiliations on his part.

Walking by my side, F—— looks like old Father Christmas, in the good old times, when the 'merrie merrie month of May' came in with soft zephyrs, instead of biting east winds, and Christmas was invariably ushered in with its snow-storm; for *he* also has turned

white, every hair of his face and head being beaded with its own sharp little icicle, whilst the powdering of snow he comes in for, as he works his way in and out of the rocks, envelopes him in a perpetual mantle of white. At length, fairly tired out, and going on quickly to ascertain whether we had almost reached encampment, a hearty *yodel* soon reached our ears; and then, to our great joy, we saw him standing on an eminence waving his hat to us, for beneath it in a sheltered nook, like an oasis in the frozen desert, where the sun had

melted the snow, he had descried our little nest of tents, looking from that distance like mushrooms growing in the green sward of a meadow.

On arrival I observe our host, who, having preceded us, is already standing by the cooking tent overhauling the commissariat baskets, obviously cumbered about things of the flesh, and hear him order another sheep to be slaughtered for the camp; when suddenly there is an alarm of fire. The canvas of our tent surrounding the flue of the little stove had become ignited, and was smouldering. The fire, however, was happily soon extinguished, little harm being done, as it was discovered in time.

Seated at dinner, we learn that several men were taken ill upon the march. Catoo had overtaken three, who, having discarded their loads, were lying helplessly on the ground. Narboo also, the interpreter, has given in, complaining of great pain in his head, and nausea. But none, like myself, appear to experience difficulty of breathing—a distressing sensation which has prevented my lying down for several nights past, obliging me to maintain an upright position, my head resting against one of the high baggage baskets. We are all, too, more or less subdued mentally; the scarcity of food daily increasing is a circumstance that lies sadly on our hearts, and is an anxiety we cannot overcome.

Later in the evening Fanchyng came to ask for quinine for her brother; and just as I was retiring to my tent, little Rags presented himself as a suppliant for a

repetition of the dose of the previous day. It must, I think, be the alcohol which makes them so anxious for it—these mountaineers take very kindly to the Englishman's 'fire water.'

Proud to see his mixture so much appreciated, F—— forthwith proceeded to prepare it; and on this occasion having no rum at hand, he had recourse to his own private and particular brandy flask. The quinine, hot water, and other ingredients, having been mixed, he concluded his ministrations by pouring, with the aid of the dim light, a goodly portion of its contents into the wooden bowl brought by the little man for the purpose; but I watched him quaff the draught with a look of disappointment mingled with disgust, which I marvelled at greatly at the time; nor was it till, seized with violent headache and nausea during the night, F—— sought relief himself in the flask aforesaid, that he remembered how, having exhausted the remainder of its contents in the former part of the day, he had subsequently replenished it at a streamlet thawed by our camp fire. The melancholy expression of my little dandy-bearer, as he drank the bitter compound, was at once explained, and I need scarcely add that he never came to our dispensary again.

At this time, when 'days are dark and friends are few,' our toilets are of the very simplest and most unpretending kind, and the perception of the 'beautiful,' as far as the adornment of the outward man is concerned, is

but little heeded. We are fast growing callous to our personal appearance, and I have become, by long habit and association, almost reconciled to the very chilblain on my nose, which has assumed a chronic, not to say an acute, form; F——, however, insisting that the chilblain is a myth, and entirely an invention of my own. But it is so long since I beheld myself reflected in a glass, that I tell him I can only guess at external appearances from internal sensations.

Our faces are all blistered, our lips livid and cracked, our complexions a becoming mixture of blue and red like mottled soap. Our features are swollen, whilst F——, finding the process of shaving an impossibility, is in that transition state in which a man looks like a disreputable brigand; and I tell him that I should myself be afraid to meet him on a lonely road! I doubt whether either of our nearest and dearest friends would recognise us, although C—— takes more kindly, in appearance, to the life of a mountaineer, frost and cold having less influence upon him than upon ourselves.

We are fast relinquishing the common habit of making any particular toilet for the night, which we begin to regard as belonging to the trammels of an effete civilisation, and generally go to sleep in full panoply. It is the custom amongst us now, on wishing each other 'good-night,' to make tender enquiries as to how small a change of raiment we purpose making, and generally decide in favour of retaining everything with

the exception of hats and boots. Nor could we well do otherwise, for all the articles of attire one does not actually wear become so hopelessly frozen before morning, and one feels besides so frost-bitten as soon as one leaves one's rugs, that dressing is a moral impossibility. Even my hair, uncoiling in my restlessness last

night, and hanging outside the covering, became so completely frozen and rigid, that this morning when I awoke it was standing out as stiffly as did the lichen which festooned the pine-trees; nor was it till I had roasted my head over the camp-fire, that I could bring it back to anything like reason, and its normal condition; Fanchyng, who has evidently learnt something of the customs of

English ladies of the period, giving it as *her* opinion, that it is a great mistake to have one's own back hair!

We dine in our hats and wraps, and, assembled round the dinner-table, form a very grotesque group; and we are so frightfully rheumatic, that when seated we don't know how in the world to get up again, and when standing it is positive agony to think of sitting down.

I have not, however, wholly given up the conventionalities of life. Fanchyng still attends me when I retire for the night, superintending the ceremony of removing my hat and boots. *A propos* of the latter, I may here mention that I long ago discarded my mocassins in her favour, being unable any longer to survive the mental shocks I hourly experienced at the sight of my own feet.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAND OF ICE.

FANCHYNG is in much distress about her brother's illness, which, although, so far as I can ascertain, it is only an ordinary attack of fever of the country, yet seems to cause her much alarm. She has always appeared to me to care much more about him than about Nimboo, and I doubt if there ever exists very much affection between husbands and wives in this land, where marriages are often arranged wholly by the parents. In fact, so utterly *distraite* is she, that I have exempted her from all work, that she may devote the whole of her attention to her sick brother, and have consequently taken to packing portmanteaus and travelling impediments myself.

It is altogether with a heavy heart that I get into my dandy, and begin the day's march, which turns out to be much the same as that of the two previous ones. We journey over a white land of desolation, occasionally skirting deep chasms, filled with stupendous blocks of brown gneiss, detached from the heights by the action of the frost, many of which, having recently fallen, are bare of snow, contrasting grandly with the livid world

around, and having become shattered by their fall, here and there display marks of Nature's own processes, from the dark and silent ages of Creation, and reveal the wondrous history of her youth.

It is now quite impossible to see where holes exist, and many a fall is the consequence; but there would seem to be a special Providence over us, for no one gets seriously hurt. A few bruises and a little blood-shedding, to which we are all pretty well accustomed by this time, is the utmost extent of our injuries. I cannot speak in sufficient praise of these mountaineers, who, although natives of the country, have rarely if ever been to these altitudes at this inclement season of the year. They cannot but suffer greatly, yet they never complain; difficulties, no matter how great they may be, seldom cause them to be even discontented; they carry their loads over the roughest places, their feet often bleeding sorely, yet they plod on as cheerfully as possible notwithstanding. During the march to-day, F—— had several more falls, which created no small amusement; they seem to regard it as especial fun to see either of the *Sahib logue* down. At last he fell so often that, in spite of its appearing quite unpremeditated, I charged him with falling by deliberate intention, just to keep their spirits up.

The stratification of Kinchinjunga and Pundeem—those mysterious and inaccessible summits, upon which no mortal tourist will ever tread, or human *savant* plant his instruments—is very plainly discerned as we approach

these mountains more closely, giving them all the appearance of fortifications for giant soldiery. In the dazzling sunlight, one could easily fancy them a shining fortress for the gods, so keen a resemblance do they bear to architectural design. How I marvel at the sculpture of these alps! What gigantic columns and slender pilasters! What noble buttresses! Here a Doric gateway, there a tower, anon a stately temple behind battlements and castellated walls; and I cannot help wondering how many ages it must have taken to wear away the solid rock, and fashion these superhuman edifices, than which nothing could be more deeply impressive.

The sun, though shining feebly upon us, lights up the snowy peaks with a lustre that is almost painful to the eye, relieved however by the mass of purple rock below the line of congelation. This rock forms an almost perpendicular precipice of many thousand feet, scoured by watercourses, which have worn it away, and seamed and gashed it, as it were, into deep chasms and fissures. It is only at brief intervals that we are favoured with a view of these superb mountains on the march to-day. Now and then the clouds, which float between them and us, open for an instant, as if to let the glory through, and then, jealous of our longer gaze, veil them as before. For the present, we have altogether lost sight of the Snowy Range of Nepaul, it being hidden by high ridges which enclose our track; but on catching a glimpse of it in one place, its lofty peaks presented an ap-

pearance of icebergs, floating in a sea of mist, and then like a mirage all faded away. There is unquestionably something very ennobling in travelling amongst scenes like these and, to use our Baboo's words, 'To look on noble things, makes noble.' By the way, I have all along forgotten to say that this individual, having grown tired of roughing it, begged C—— to allow him to return to Darjeeling, failing to see the use of subjecting himself to so much inconvenience for a mere sentiment, and no doubt dreading besides to encounter these Arctic horrors, where it 'rains ice.'

From this distance we can see that the summit of Kinchinjunga is not snow, like that of the lower peaks, but ice or white granite, or some glazed substance not at all unlike quartz. Beyond Kinchinjunga, it is said that there exists a vast mountain region, wholly uninhabitable for man or domestic animals. 'A silent region of death,' as Hatti expressed it, looking very mysterious, and opening his eyes very wide. 'Whoever goes there, Mem sahib, dies. Men cannot live there—yâks cannot live there—sheep cannot live there—nothing, nothing.'

Much exhausted by the march, we halt at two o'clock, and with a few brambles which we collected as we came along, a scanty fire is made, and we reinvigorate ourselves with a cup of strong tea. The baggage coolies, too, following our example, light another fire hard by, and parch an ear or two of Indian corn, slaking their thirst by eating snow. Many of them are suffering from nausea

and giddiness, and I experience still a difficulty of breathing, which disables me from making the smallest exertion; but the gentlemen have not only recovered from their first experiences of elevation, but are so provokingly well that it was almost a relief to overtake C——, a short time before we halted, sitting on a stone, looking very wobegone, and having recourse to his pocket flask!

Our Guide, however, and most of the camp being in advance, we do not linger long; but before starting on

our march, I give Fanchyng another dose of quinine for her brother, a good supply of which our kind host placed at my disposal.

Then onwards we wend our weary way, through ice and thickening snow, by dark caves formed of fallen rock, walled in by icicles, which in some instances extending to

the ground appear like crystal columns. Into these caves the coolies crawl occasionally by twos and threes, to rest awhile beneath their shelter, where, seated in their bright many-coloured garments, they remind one of a fairy tale or Christmas pantomime.

What a strange world is this world of ice! The solemn stillness in the air, and all around us, how oppressive to the spirit! The feeling, too, seems to be contagious; for my bearers, as well as the rest of our camp, pursue their way silently, wholly unlike their usual manner. No sound is heard but a shout from F——, now and again, to assure me he is not far distant; and when this dies away, the silence and desertion seem only greater than before. It is the silence of non-existence, very awful when one paused to think about it.

'Go back to Darjeeling, Mem sahib,' exclaim my poor tired dandy-wallahs, as they carry me along. 'This is a cold, hungry country. No rice, no bhoota, no birds; nothing to eat here: we shall all be starved.'

Upon which I try to explain to them, that by returning now we should be endangering their lives, as it seems pretty plain that the Kajee does not mean to send us food as he promised, while, by persevering in our march to Yangpoong, we have every reason to believe we shall find it there. Well would it have been, however, had we taken their advice there and then!

Thousands of feet below us, and extending many a weary mile, lies a valley of desolation. It is like some

nether world. Rock upon rock, tempest-shattered, riven and split into fantastic and unearthly shapes, may be seen standing one upon another; pines, torn up by their roots, lie prostrate and half hidden beneath them, like sleeping mammoths and primæval monsters; whilst the giddy height from which we scanned them, favouring the Ideal, lent mystery to the scene, and, rendering Form indefinite, gave fuller play to the imagination. Truly those who love Nature in her wild and savage aspects should come here; for a grander combination of these qualities cannot be conceived—the snowy peak, the ice-bound rock, the blasted pine, and the deadly precipice.

A mist had been shutting out the north for some considerable time—one of those little silvery cloudlets, that we are wont to admire so much from Darjeeling, and which float so lazily across the face of the snows; but which, on closer acquaintance, reveal themselves in their true character, as dense leaden vapour, many miles in extent, saturating every fold of your garments, and chilling the very life-blood in your veins. Yet rob this mountain region of its mist, and it will lack one of its noblest elements. Watch it as it sails gently over the face of that nearer mountain yonder, enveloping it as in a soft white veil. Watch it again, ascending from the depths in angry clouds, wreathing, writhing, and curving into every fantastic form, wrapping up the mountains as in a death shroud, or hooding them like cloistered nuns.

At length it opens, and displays Kubra straight

ahead of us, in all its crystalline loveliness and silver fretwork, cutting its rugged way into the very heavens: its outline is but slightly altered on nearer approach. Behind it rises Junnoo, flanked by smaller peaks; but these, though above the line of perpetual congelation, are only partially covered with snow, portions of purplish-brown rock peering through it here and there. Amongst them I recognised that singularly flat mountain, so like an inverted bowl, which lies to the left of Junnoo, and which seems but a molehill when seen from Darjeeling.

At this point we came upon the footprints of some large animal, probably those of the snow-bear, animals which are said to inhabit this elevation, but which do not cross our path, no doubt being frightened away by our numbers.

The cold had not seemed half so intense on this day's march as on that of many previous ones, in consequence of the perfect stillness in the air. The very winds themselves seem to be frozen up in their four quarters; and, when this is the case, it is often difficult to realise the lowness of the temperature. Nor could we have even imagined it, had we not seen that hot water in our tents became a solid lump of ice in the space of a few minutes.

The baggage coolies who were yesterday suffering from the rarefaction of the atmosphere are better, whilst those who have borne up bravely until now have succumbed at last, and are very ill. Several were seized

with sickness on the march, and all are so thoroughly tired and worn out, that we should certainly, were it possible, determine upon halting here to-morrow, to give them a day's rest, which one and all so sorely need; but, with famine staring us in the face, we dare not delay, and must push on to Yangpoong, which the Guide assures us, notwithstanding my little dandy-bearer's warning, we shall reach, all being well, to-morrow afternoon.

Fanchyng is complaining of symptoms of fever—'*tup*,' as they call it—but her brother is better, his attack having yielded, as it generally will do, to large doses of quinine. I am obliged, therefore, once more to have recourse to C——'s medicine chest on her account, having exhausted the supply he first gave me. Catoo also comes begging for some of F——'s decoction; but *rum* growing scarce, we give him tea instead, of which all these people are very fond.

No rice whatever is now left in camp, three sheep and a small quantity of Indian corn being the only food we have to depend upon; but this we hope will keep them alive until succour come. All the poor fellows, however, are put upon famine diet, with the exception of Tendook's retinue, all of whom, we shrewdly suspect, are in rather better plight.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WE GET INTO DIFFICULTIES.

STRUCK tents this morning as soon as we could arouse our poor weary people, who lay huddled together under the rocks, each with his blanket round him, and often a stone for his pillow.

The messengers we sent to Yangting so long ago have neither overtaken us with supplies of food, nor followed us with tidings as to why the Kajee has so miserably failed us. Great and hourly increasing depression, therefore, reigns in camp, and the poor coolies have lost all their natural exuberance of spirits. We are besides very unfortunate in the weather, which adds not a little to our discouragement. A great deal of mist is hanging about the higher ridges—a very inauspicious thing for our march through deeper snow, which we shall have to encounter to-day on the heights. I take care this time not to go on in advance of F——, but keep near him, our attendants and ourselves forming one continuous line.

For a considerable distance we passed beneath a mountain, which effectually shut out the west as with a tremen-

dous battlemented wall ; down the side of which we saw a frozen cataract, whose waters, gradually congealing as they fell, had formed themselves into icy shafts and columns, clearly distinguishable even at this distance, fully a mile away.

We now begin to ascend the steep face of a mountain, following carefully the footsteps of our Guide, and zig-zagging to render it less steep. Heavy masses of vapour continually roll past, now enveloping us completely, and then dispersing for awhile, affording glimpses of clear blue sky, which helped to raise the spirits of us all, giving hope of a bright day for the remainder of the march. At length it dissolved entirely, and the sun showed himself, a well-defined disc of mellow fire, out of the darkest blue sky I ever beheld, for at this elevation the azure becomes almost purple in its intensity ; and then Junnoo, clad in his glittering mahtle, the one object above us, towered ma-

jestically heavenwards. How wonderfully near it looked! We could even see the crystals sparkling in the sunshine, and I felt more than ever, with Alpine pictures in my memory, how utterly impossible it is for human hand to represent, as it is for mortal speech to express, the purity and loveliness of snow.

Not only were we ourselves elated by the glorious sight, but our men also; and the fact that we had at last reached the snowy range we had travelled so many weary miles to visit, sent a thrill of satisfaction through our hearts. The novelty of the scene, too, seemed for awhile to make us all forgetful of the one great anxiety. Moreover, were we not to reach Yangpoong at the end of the day's march, and be within reach of food?

Being now in very deep snow, we have to be careful to follow the footsteps of our Guide, and of the goodly number of coolies who have preceded us, lest by forming a new track, or even one contiguous to it, we inadvertently mislead the remainder of our camp, and cause them to lose their way—by no means an improbable result should the mist again surround us.

A little further climb, and we find ourselves on the summit of an extensive and slightly concaved plateau, hemmed in on all sides by small snow-clad peaks, through which jagged portions of madder-tinted gneiss are visible, and over which the unsullied Junnoo, its head now shrouded in mist, reigns supreme. As far as eye can reach stretches one livid field of snow, so vast that we

feel quite lost amidst it, the colourless waste apparently seeming interminable; yet not colourless either, for each undulation along our pathway casts its pale blue shadow, sharp and well-defined, and there are exquisite gradations of light and shade everywhere, to rob it of absolute monotony.

Across this plain we march quickly, for, the snow being deep, all irregularities of surface are smoothed over, and it is too hard to clog the feet. What an exhilarating sight it is, to watch the coolies with their loads hurrying along in single file!—their various and many-coloured costumes contrasting strongly and vividly with the white world around, against which they stand out in bold relief; whilst at almost every instant some amusing adventure occurs, to call forth peals of laughter from Nautch-wallah and the merry Lepchas, and in fact from the whole party. Now one man falling, hammers the ice with his head, the contents of his basket scattering themselves hither and thither in every direction. Now another is seen idiotically sliding forwards, endeavouring to clutch the air to save himself, and of course failing in his endeavours, with the usual result. Then Tendook himself, walking solemnly and sedately

by my side, is suddenly seen to submerge, as he falls into a hole, where nothing is seen of him but his head, pigtail, and little round Chinese cap with its scarlet top-knot, and whence he has to be dragged out, unhurt I am thankful to say, but with no small difficulty.

We now begin to lament bitterly the loss of our dark glasses, the light reflected from the snow already affecting our eyes most painfully. Some of the baggage coolies, I observe, are provided with these necessary preservatives of the sight, wearing spectacles made of yâk's hair finely plaited.

The elevation also is again beginning to tell upon some of us. A little further on and we overtake C——, who, sitting down in a state of utter collapse, is apparently suffering from vertigo. *I*, too, have a return of palpitation of the heart and laboured breathing; others feel intense pain in the head, attended with nausea; but F——, with the exception of feeling very tired, seems happily quite himself.

Hitherto the glare had not been at all greater than we had anticipated; but soon we were enveloped by a semi-transparent mist, through which the sun, like a ball of fire, could be distinctly recognised. The light became so intolerably dazzling as we proceeded, that we could neither see before nor around us. The very atmosphere itself seemed to vibrate and be composed of floating spiculæ of snow—glittering atoms, through which the sun appeared a great scorching eye, most painful to gaze upon.

The effect of the glare upon our sight was greater now than I have power to describe, and the effort of keeping the eyes open such torture, that they were streaming with enforced tears. Had there been but a particle of blue sky, we might have found relief, but this dazzling mist which enclosed us, seemed but to serve as a corradiation for the sun. We had all, of course, heard of snow-blindness; but anything so distressingly painful to the sight as this we never had imagined. The poor coolies, who had not provided themselves with spectacles, taking off part of their clothing, now cover their eyes, and lunge along almost blindfold. Following their example, we do likewise, only uncovering the eyes now and again, to assure ourselves we are in the right track; then for one instant only can we discern the baggage coolies in advance, and all is darkness as before. At length a time came when we could not see our way at all, and Tendook, who was near us, having called a halt, Catoo stooped his head almost to the ground as he endeavoured to discover whether there were any footprints in advance of us; but to our dismay he declared there were none, and it consequently became but too manifest, that we had deviated from the right track.

It was an anxious moment; but, after some search, the path was traced by marks of blood in the snow, which some poor fellow whose feet the ice must have sorely cut had left behind. We, therefore, retrace our steps for a short distance, and, opening my eyes for a moment, I

recognise our host being led by one of the coolies, overcome with blindness as well as vertigo.

Not a little discouraging was it to find him—the strongest of our trio, on whom we one and all so greatly depended—give in thus; but had this fearful state of things lasted much longer, we must all have thrown our-

selves down upon the snow, and awaited our fate, the sight of each becoming worse and worse every instant. We were rapidly losing even the momentary glimpses of surrounding objects which we had had previously, almost total blindness seizing us for the time being. At length my bearers, declaring themselves too blind and giddy to carry me, set me and my dandy on the ground, without further ceremony. But, happily, just as we were beginning to

despair of being able to proceed on our journey, the mist began floating away, and, to our inexpressible relief, the sky showed itself above as an opaque and vast purple dome overshadowing us.

Then gradually, and by slow degrees, we regained our sight. One by one distant objects became visible, the sombre purple affording incalculable rest to the eye; and we now find that we have almost traversed the snow-field, and that a steep ridge of black rock is shutting us in northwards, and, oh joy! beneath this, we recognise our Guide and advanced party awaiting us.

Anything like the intense relief this rock afforded us, wearied as we were with the field of glistening white, cannot be conceived by those who have not similarly suffered. It was truly like the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' and I doubt whether this beautiful simile, so often made use of, was ever so applicable even to travellers in the scorching desert as to us at that moment, whilst the feeling of security, in once more finding ourselves in the presence of our Guide, was scarcely less inspiriting. On reaching this spot, we climbed the ridge, and found we were standing on what appeared to be a gigantic snow-drift, the snow which had blown hither for ages having lodged against the rock, until it had become almost as hard as adamant itself.

It was a sight worth immortalising in deeper tablets than those, alas! of memory, and one which an artist would have gone far to paint. The trackless wastes of snow

throwing into relief the picturesque figures, some of whom were standing in groups, whilst others reclined upon their loads. There is an unconstraint and natural grace in all Orientals, whether dwellers in the plains or hardy mountaineers, and they often pose themselves in attitudes which are perfectly statuesque, of the beauty and dignity of which they are themselves, of course, wholly unconscious, but which makes one long to tarry and portray them.

Here we rest awhile, and C——, now quite himself again, tries to dilute some cognac with snow for the general benefit; but, instead of its becoming amenable to our necessities, and melting as we naturally expected it would do, it refuses to liquefy, and instantly transforms the spirit into a solid lump of ice! Whilst halting we try to gauge the depth of the snow with our alpenstocks, which are seven feet long, but do not succeed in reaching the bottom of it; we also make some deep holes, and the colour of the snow, on looking into them, is that of the most perfectly exquisite and liquid azure it is possible to conceive.

The order to resume the march being now given, the coolies take up their loads, and the Guide, looking more sinister and Mephistophelean than ever, precedes us. A steep ridge has to be descended on the other side. This descent Tendook and C—— resolve to accomplish by sliding down *like* two schoolboys, an example followed by many of the baggage coolies, with various results; whilst others, rashly attempting a glissade, get overbalanced by their loads, and may be seen in all directions

tumbling head over heels to the bottom of the descent, where they are eventually picked up more frightened than hurt, but with a complete dislodgment of the contents of their baskets. My dandy, however, is ingeniously converted by Catoo into a kind of sledge for my behoof: but F——, as an old and experienced Alpine traveller, wisely decides to do the thing scientifically or not at all, and, planting his alpenstock firmly in the ground, determines upon descending by a series of dignified leaps. Hatti had just given my sledge an impetus, and I was proceeding in my downward career as satisfactorily as could be desired, when half way I caught sight of F——, who, benevolently turning round, bade me 'hold on' whatever I did. But the effort proved too much for him. He first made one desperate and agonising grab at the snow, then felt for some mysterious hand in mid-air to save him, and heeled over, reaching the end of the declivity in a more rapid manner than he had

anticipated; whereupon, once safely landed, I made a pencil sketch of him, which, out of regard to his wishes, I forbear to introduce here—a waste of genius, for which he is wholly responsible!

Then journeying on over the same kind of snow-field out of which rise jagged peaks a few hundred feet above us, and which hem us in completely, I cannot help mentioning to F——, who is walking by my side, that this seems quite unlike what we imagined the approach would be to Yangpoong, which is a yâk station, about the height of Singaleelah; here, on the contrary, we seem surrounded by perpetual snow. He, too, says he has been marvelling, and that we seem rather to be travelling right in the midst of the splintered snow-covered rocks, above the line of congelation, which lie at the west base of Junnoo, and which from Darjeeling appear like the uneven teeth of some animal. There was another circumstance also that struck us as very extraordinary, viz. when we began the ascent this morning, Junnoo was not only close above us, but we were slightly to its left—that is to say, *west* of it rather than east—in which latter direction we imagined we should have to journey to reach Yangpoong. Major Shirwill's map is in C——'s possession, but no doubt hidden in the depths of some portmanteau, for since we had been under the leadership of a guide, we had hardly consulted it, trusting him implicitly.

Following the camp in single file—for we are too far behind C—— to talk with him on the subject—we

are once more shrouded in mist, and this time the sun entirely disappears. Still we plod on, wondering if we shall ever begin to descend to the long-wished-for Yangpoong, when suddenly there is a halt called from the front, and overtaking C—— we learn, to our horror, that the line of men who went on in advance of us is nowhere to be seen.

Accustomed to call each other from mountain to mountain, these nomad tribes have a peculiar and prolonged cry, that may be heard from a great distance —this they now sustain for a considerable time; but still no response reached us from our missing people. Again another shout, louder than the first, followed by a breathless silence, and then the unwelcome conclusion forced itself upon our minds that we must have wandered considerably from the track.

A proposition was then made to fire a gun, trusting that its report might reach them as a signal of distress, and induce them to return to our help. Accordingly C——, advancing some paces, fired his rifle in the direction which we believed they must have taken, although it was more than possible that we had lost our bearings entirely by this time.

At the same moment the brave Tendook, penetrating the mist, went off himself to endeavour to find the track. Most of the coolies laden with tents and stores happened to be amongst the number of those in advance, and the harrowing thought at once suggested itself to our minds

that if *they* had also lost their way, and we ourselves managed to reach our destination in safety, we should be in a sad plight, without either food or shelter in these dreary wilds.

I do not know how long we remained in this terrible suspense, for one cannot estimate such periods by time, which loses all proportion when one is tormented by such agonising fears, and when each moment seems to stretch into a whole lifetime. Thoughts of what might be our fate came crowding thick and fast, every possibility rising before us. At length we heard the muffled sound of voices, and the shadowy form of Tendook appeared, bearing the cheering news that our Guide and party were returning; and the little spectral band were soon visible through the darkling mist.

Once at our side, we ascertained that, having lost all sight of us, they were already endeavouring to retrace their steps when the report of the rifle reached them; but our joy and relief, alas! were doomed to be but of short duration, for they gave us the discouraging intelligence that our Guide knew no more in what direction the village of Yangpoong lay than we did ourselves!

At this announcement, cutting off as it did the possibility of our reaching that place upon which we had set our longing hearts for so many weary days, a panic seized the whole camp. The Lepchas, relieving themselves of their loads, sank down upon the snow, and burying their faces in their hands in mute despair,

appeared to have given themselves up as utterly lost in a way that was very heart-rending to witness.

Not so the Bhootias, however, most of whom stood erect in excited groups, with looks bold and defiant, talking together, but not low enough to prevent our hearing that they were blaming *us* for having brought them hither, 'where,' as they said, 'they must starve and die,' not seeming to realise that we ourselves were in the like danger. Nor did they hesitate to imply that we had purposely so brought them; whilst the impulsive and child-like Nautch-wallah, standing apart from the rest, lifted up his voice and wept.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LOST IN THE ABODE OF SNOW.

AT that moment we were completely in their power, and, had they chosen, the whole camp might have broken out into open mutiny. As for ourselves, we felt like shipwrecked mariners in an ocean of snow; but neither gave utterance to the fears which possessed him, as, having summoned Tendook, whom we feel to be quite one with us in this terrible emergency, we took solemn council together as to the best thing to be done.

'Are you sure you don't at all know where we are?' enquired C—— of the Guide, whom he summoned to our side.

'We are now in the district of Yangpoong, Sahib,' he replied; 'but in this mist I cannot take you farther, for I know not in what direction the village lies.'

It was then suggested that several detachments of coolies should be sent down the hollows, in different directions, to ascertain whether any camping ground could be found, where wood might be obtained; but this was soon discarded as extremely dangerous. The coolies might fall over precipices, and the risk to their lives was

far too great to justify our subjecting them to it, even were it probable—which it was not—that a place of the kind could be found sufficiently near to enable them to return with the intelligence before nightfall.

It was then proposed that we should encamp where we were; but this proposition was as quickly dismissed as the previous one. Not a particle of wood was obtainable, and without fires we must all have become frozen before morning. Moreover, it was very doubtful whether tent-pegs could be made to hold in the snow; and besides all these discouraging considerations, it seemed to be threatening for a snowstorm. There was that peculiar feeling in the atmosphere which usually precedes snow in lower elevations; and if it should come, and our track hither were obliterated, we might wander for days over these mountains without food or shelter, and must inevitably perish.

The suggestion therefore of halting here was, for various reasons, at once abandoned. Very palpable signs of insubordination were beginning to manifest themselves, not only amongst the Bhootias, but the Nepaulese also, to which we dare not shut our eyes, whilst the Lepchas were taken possession of by those notions of fatalism, which render them quite powerless in times of danger.

These symptoms more than aught else determined us upon taking decided action of some sort; and whilst F——, C——, and Tendook were parleying on the feasibility of our pushing on, with the hope of getting out of

the mist, and once more ascertaining our bearings or remaining in our present position awhile, trusting to its clearing away, I realised the situation and all its terrors. I felt that not an instant should be lost. To travel further into the lonely heart of these mountains with the mere possibility of discovering our whereabouts, or lingering where we were on the miserable chance of the mist clearing, would alike be running a tremendous risk. What if it should not clear? What if, in the event of its doing so, our Guide—in whom we have now lost all confidence—were unable after all to indicate the direction of Yangpoong? It would be too late then to retrace our steps whilst daylight lasts. With a woman's natural instinct I believe I arrived at the only safe course to pursue.

'Let us return at once; don't hesitate for a moment,' I cried, stamping the snow with my foot in my vehemence. 'It is the only thing to save us.'

After a few moments' solemn and earnest consultation—there was no time for more, for evening was approaching—they yielded willingly to my proposal; the men were informed that we proposed retracing our steps, and encamping at the very first place where we could discover wood. It was truly a neck-or-nothing kind of thing to do; we had come thus far in quest of food, and were now to relinquish all hope of finding it. At that moment, however, we could hardly heed the future, the present was all we dared to contemplate.

For one instant a terrible pang shot through me. Was I destined to be the means of bringing sorrow on others? *I would come*: these three words pierced my very soul like a red-hot iron. Had I been less anxious the expedition would not have been undertaken at all. I thought of C——'s wife and his little children; I thought too of my mother and her letter of warning, on being informed of our proposed tour:—'I dread your travelling in a mountain region so little known to Europeans, and so far removed from civilisation. Do not attempt too much, and, above all, avoid the many dangers to which you will be exposed by travelling in the region of perpetual snow. Rest satisfied with the lower levels. I think you are rash in attempting to explore so vast and unknown a country.'

The announcement of our decision was received in various ways: by some few, with signs of satisfaction, by others with surly and ill-suppressed mutterings, but one and all seemed unwilling to resume their loads. We had been leading them on, day after day, with the assurance that at Yangpoong they would find sustenance; it was no wonder, therefore, tired and disappointed as they were, they should lose pluck and even confidence in our words, and we felt that nothing we could now say would inspire them with hope for the future.

The gentle Lepchas remained in the same position, scarcely lifting their heads when this last proposition was made. In common with Mahomedans and Hindoos,

they entertain a blind belief in *kismut* (fate), and having once made up their minds that a thing is inevitable, they will endure it with an indifference that is perfectly stoical; but there was fearful despair written in some countenances notwithstanding, and it needed all the energy and decision we could muster, and every argument we could think of, to imbue them with the courage necessary for beginning another weary and hopeless march.

Wandering in and out amongst the groups of baggage coolies, with my own hands I helped some to lift their loads, endeavouring at the same time to arouse others who had relapsed into a state of lethargy, trying to speak words of comfort and encouragement to all; feeling that if *I*, a woman, set the example of exertion, there was enough chivalry existing in the hearts of these poor ignorant creatures to make them not only obey but help me. F——, C——, and Tendook, meanwhile, by exercise of authority, were doing *their* share amongst the Bhootias and Nepaulese, which answers far better with these tribes than simple persuasion, and in ten minutes' time every load was resumed, and their faces turned in the direction whence we had come.

Then followed a scene of such dire confusion as I shall never forget. Some of the more reckless and headstrong of the coolies began rushing madly forwards, quite regardless of the track. But C——, alive to the danger this threatened, was in pursuit in an instant; whilst Ten-

dook, whose voice was so seldom heard, now loudly and sternly commanded them to remain stationary until everyone should be ready for the start. All were then made to advance in single file, C—— heading the camp, I coming in the middle, the faithful Tendook by my side, and F—— bringing up the rear. Feeling something like the force of military discipline, they now became more orderly; but it was not without violent efforts, and alternate scolding and encouragement, that we succeeded in urging the poor footsore fellows onwards with their burdens, from the weight of which, in their weakened state, many seemed to be sinking. In several places, too, our path was made sadly conspicuous by marks of blood, as they plodded slowly along.

Although suffering greatly from difficulty of breathing, I tried to make light of everything, bidding them remember that if *I* were not despairing for the future, they who were men should not be so either. With the same purpose I made the mountains echo with many an assumed laugh, at every little adventure by the way, in which even the Lepchas who were near me, forgetful of all for the moment but their love of fun, tried to join. By such small subterfuges did we strive to relieve the tedium of the march; but they were, after all, such a sorry and sepulchral counterfeit, that we soon relinquished them, for they only seemed to relapse into greater sadness than before. How completely sanguine we had been on starting in the morning! but how had all changed!

Our day-star of hope had given place to an evening of utter despair.

At length, as we went on, the mist grew less dense, and yonder, straight ahead of us, about two miles distant, we recognised the rock beneath which we halted on our way hither, thrice an oasis in our desert now, for we thereby not only knew that we had not mistaken the track, but that being once reached, we should be within a very few miles of our last camping-place. I shouted to F—— behind me, but he had already caught sight of it himself, and there ran a murmur of general satisfaction through the whole length of our long line. It was like an electric shock, and had the poor fellows been less weary and sorrow-stricken, I feel sure they would have got up some kind of cheer.

To the phlegmatic Tendook I exclaimed, 'We are saved!' But he, less impulsive than I, after a short pause, deliberately, and as I thought sorrowfully, replied, in the concise and epigrammatic style of all these Eastern people, *Jism fānī aur rūh bāki hai, mem sahib* ('The body is mortal, the soul is immortal'), as though he would reprove me for my want of consideration, that although, in all probability, we were saved from perishing in the snow, yet so long as we were without reasonable expectation of obtaining food, we could not in truth say that we were really *saved*.

The welcome sight afforded by the 'great rock' gave renewed courage to our men. On reaching it a brief

halt was made, whilst F—— scaled it to its summit, whence the almost entire portion of our march could be traced, as well as the vast snowy plateau on either side, endeavouring to discover by the aid of his field-glass whether anyone had been left behind.

Then once again the signal for resuming the march was given, followed by the heavy 'tramp' of our wretched men, broken only by the half-suppressed groans and

sighs they occasionally uttered; and there was something intensely affecting in the sight of the baggage coolies tottering under their loads, but, above all, in the silence and gravity with which they maintained the march.

A descent now lay before us the whole way, and we were able to quicken our pace; the twilight being con-

siderably lengthened fortunately by the reflexion from the surrounding snow. Suddenly a halt was made by some men a few yards in advance of me, and F—— hastening to the spot, ascertained that one of the party had discovered footprints diverging from the track formed by the upward march, evidently those of someone *retracing* his steps.

In another hour, by which time darkness had almost set in, even in these northern snow-girt latitudes, we came to anchor in the same place in which we encamped last night. This point safely reached, the necessity for bearing up no longer existed, and unnerved by the physical and mental strain to which I had been so long subjected, I completely gave way. Suffering from excruciating pain in the head, I sat down on a stone and leant for rest on one of the coolies' baskets, whilst C——, fetching a bottle of chloroform, saturated a handkerchief with it and placed it across my forehead and temples. By this time my eyes were so inflamed by the reflexion from the snow that I could scarcely see at all, and the eyelids were greatly swollen also.

Tired as he was, F—— assisted the men in pitching tents, and then, before taking any refreshment himself, he served out, regardless of the future, a double portion of undiluted rum to each man, offering some to Tendook also for *his* retinue, which he declined, the greater number of them being Nepaulese, who, as Hindoos, neither eat meat, nor take any fermented drink whatever. He

was not, however, above accepting a modicum for himself, being in the habit of taking, for his oft infirmities, a little 'fire-water' which, from 'motives of delicacy,' he kept in a champagne-bottle, to which I had often seen him have recourse on the march, when worn-out nature needed support. Neither did C—— forget the graver necessities of our poor attendants, but ordered another sheep to be killed, which would afford, supposing an equal division were made, about a quarter of a pound of nourishment to each man; and there are now but *two sheep* and a few handfuls of Indian corn standing between our camp and absolute starvation!

Foot prints.

CHAPTER XL.

WE MISS ONE OF OUR PEOPLE.

We had retired for the night, and were fast asleep, when we were suddenly aroused by footsteps outside the tent, and a voice calling to us; upon which F—— going out discovered Fanchyng and her husband, the former crying bitterly. They had missed her little brother, and had been searching throughout the camp, but he was nowhere to be found. Neither could anyone remember having seen him after we halted at the rock on our upward march, where Catoo recollected helping him to lift his load. On hearing this, I instantly dressed and went out.

'Have you told the *burra Sahib*?' enquired F——, meaning of course C——.

'No,' was the reply. 'I came straight here.'

'I will go and call him,' I cried, feeling that he ought to know the lad was missing.

'Stay!' cried F——, seizing my arm, 'he is asleep by this time. It can do no good to waken him. We are up already, and can do all that can be done; he has need of rest, and it is well at any rate that one of us should

get it, and be prepared for the morrow's anxiety and fatigue. Leave him undisturbed.'

'But go and arouse Catoo and Hatti,' said he, addressing Nimboo, 'and tell them to come here; but take care not to disturb any of the rest;' for most of the poor fellows were sleeping the sleep of the weary by this time.

When they had obeyed the summons, F—— told them that wood must be collected at once, and a fire made on high ground, above our camping place, and kept burning all night, to attract, if possible, the attention of the poor fellow and lead him towards us in case he were still alive; for to have gone on a search in the darkness would have been utterly useless. As to his being left behind in the snow we entertained no great fears, having been careful to ascertain on starting that none were in the rear. Moreover, had he lingered behind, F—— must have descried him from the summit of the rock, whence he would have appeared as a dark object on the snow, even if too distant to be recognised, and he distinctly remembers that nothing whatever was visible on our line of march. Then the footprints of some one, apparently retracing his steps, gave us hope that for some unaccountable reason he may have returned to some place or other below the region of snow, and with this idea I tried to comfort Fanchyng, who had given herself up to uncontrollable grief.

Drawing her gently into the tent, I kept her with me,

while F——, followed by Catoo, Hatti, and Nimboo—the latter carrying a lantern,—went to find the highest point near the encampment upon which to make the fire; and it was not very long before its flame was seen, all fog by this time having disappeared, the stars too shining clearly. There was no lack of small wood lying about in this sheltered hollow, belonging to a stunted and hardy kind of rhododendron, as well as that of leafless brambles half buried in the snow; and they heaped it up until the blaze could have been distinguished miles away in this clear atmosphere, and barren lifeless land.

Determining upon keeping Fanchyng with me all the night, I forthwith rigged up the dhurrie, and divided the tent in two, in the inner partition of which I made an impromptu bed for the poor sorrowing girl. She had a great deal of fever about her still, and was seized with alternate fits of shivering and feverishness, naturally increased by her intense anxiety and distress of mind. Believing a cup of hot tea would do her good, I boiled some water in my little etna, our stoves not having been lighted at the end of this day's march, neither of us having had the heart to ask the poor tired coolies to cut the necessary wood for the purpose.

Presently F——, having told off several of our men to watch through the hours of darkness and prevent the fire from waning, came down to sleep awhile; but I could see from his restlessness that he could not bear to shut himself up in his own snug tent, whilst the poor lad was he

knew not where. He remained only about half an hour; and then saying he thought he heard a shout like that of someone calling at a distance, hastened up again, promising to return as soon as he had ascertained.

He was not long away; but to Fanchyng and myself, hungering for tidings below, a whole lifetime of suspense seemed to be compressed within the short interval of his absence; and by his silence, which was more significant than words, we knew that his quest had been unavailing. He then left us again, saying he would watch the fire with the men.

Covering Fanchyng up more warmly, I tried to induce her to sleep a little. The tea had evidently done her good, she seemed less feverish and more composed, so I left her, for worn out by her sorrow she appeared inclined to sleep; and throwing myself upon my own mattress, I was soon asleep also, only awaking for a moment or two when F—— came in, about two hours later, and then in my great weariness of body and mind I fell soundly off again.

About two o'clock I too fancied I heard someone calling from afar. I did not awaken F——, feeling only too thankful to find him sleeping and gathering strength for the morrow's fatigue, for we know not now what a morrow will bring forth.

Fully dressed, and simply throwing my fur hood over my head and a warm rug around me, I determined to go out and see for myself; but peeping through a small slit

in the 'kernaughts' to ascertain whether Fanchyng still slept, great was my surprise to find her kneeling by the side of a small heap of stones. She must have crept out silently and gathered these stones while I slept. In the centre some sticks hung with bits of worsted of different colours were placed, and she was praying I could see, she looked at once so earnest and so true. A leaf from one of the books which I had seen the Buddhists use was lying by her side. It was probably taken from a charm-box she always wore, but her face was upturned now, praying as it seemed half unconsciously, for her lips did not move. The people of her creed *sit* and pray; but she had assumed the natural attitude of intense and earnest supplication.

One's perceptions become painfully keen in hours of suspense and sorrow, and the nervous system so greatly on the stretch, that one is more alive, as it were, to external impressions, the faintest sound making us start as though the very air which rustles the objects around us bore tidings on its wings. I thought that, in leaving the tent, I had made no noise whatever, yet I must have done so, for she uttered a sharp painful little cry, and enquired with a startled frightened look, 'Who's there!' without, however, unclasping her hands, or rising from her knees; it did not occur to her that she could be seen from without.

'It's only I, Fanchyng,' I replied in a whisper, fearing to disturb others, to whom sleep was so necessary.

But evidently thinking that, by coming at such an hour, I must have tidings to communicate, she crept out.

'Is he ——?' and she gulped the remainder of the sentence; but I knew from her terrified manner of speaking that the word she could not utter was '*found*.'

'No, Fanchyng, I have no news to tell you whatever; but a few minutes ago I thought I heard a sound as of some one calling, and I am just going up the hill to see.'

'Mem sahib! dear Mem sahib! Oh! let me go too!' she exclaimed. Drawing her raiment around her, she went on before me; and two apparitions were soon seen climbing the mountain slope, with a pale moon-shadow following, for the waning moon, a mere crescent now, hung low in the heavens.

For one instant we stood, two black figures against the watch-fires, and listened; but there was no sound save the crackling of the wood as it burned away, or when the flame burst forth with a sudden splutter, nor any sign of life, except the colossal form of Hatti standing like a sentinel.

At these elevations the sky is black and opaque; but the moon and stars, though possessing greater brilliancy and lustre, scintillate infinitely less, and appear to shine with a steadier light. The cold was intense, and all Nature looked unutterably solemn and lonely. Deodunga was visible, looking spectral beneath the stars; but over its highest peak the faintest shade of rose still lingered, as though the great glory of the sunset had

scarce departed yet, whilst the fitful gleaming of the fire against the dark immensity of sky made everything look weird and supernatural. Fanchyng crept closer to my side; the stern aspect of Nature seeming to terrify her, as she thought of her little brother, exposed to all its pitiless force.

'Oh, Mem sahib,' she cried, in Hindustani, 'it is all so terrible; this uncertainty I mean!' And casting one steadfast gaze around her, as if taking in at a glance every fearful possibility, she shuddered, her whole frame for the moment convulsed, and then throwing herself on the ground, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

'Fanchyng, you must come down,' I said; 'think how this exposure will increase your fever, and, ah me! with so little clothing, the cold will kill you!'

'Never mind *me*, Mem sahib,' she replied, so soon as she could stifle her sobs; 'I can only think of *him*. Let me stop here and watch with Hatti I want to stay out in the cold, I don't want to live; and do you go below lest the Sahib miss you.'

Living day after day in the heart of Nature, where all our best impulses are fostered, and far removed from the stern conventionalities of life, I had grown wonderfully attached to these hill people, so childlike and impulsive as they are; an attachment, not much to be wondered at either, remembering my previous predilections for them.

After much persuasion inducing her to return with

me to the tent—for I dared not allow her to leave my side for an instant, knowing, if I did so, she would arouse the whole camp—I sat up the remainder of the night, trying to soothe and cheer her; till at length, overcome by very weariness, and forgetful of all for awhile, she and her sorrow slept.

CHAPTER XLI.

OUR GUIDE DECAMPS.

WHEN dawn at last began to break, F—— went out to enquire after the health of the camp. Cattoo was already up, and hearing that F—— had left the tent, came forward with the intelligence that several men were ill and incapable of moving, little Rags amongst the number; whilst others were already lying down outside the tent, waiting for medicine, their eyes frightfully inflamed, as well as suffering in various other ways. Going up to them with cheery voice, and words full of encouragement and hope, for he is one of sanguine nature, he bid them one and all remain where they were till the sun should be up, assuring them that the 'mem sahib' would at that time attend to their wounds; and he then climbed the hill above encampment, where a little knot of men had already gathered.

I was still lying on my little mattress when Tendook and his nephew, not having felt satisfied with F——'s assurance that I was really better, came to enquire after me in person, and, stooping down, and peeping beneath the kernaughts, insisted on ocular demonstration of the fact.

Very grateful was I for that which at other times would have seemed an impertinence, for it was impossible not to observe the undisguised pleasure and relief written on their broad, honest faces, when I gave them the declaration from my own lips, that I was so far recovered as to feel able to undertake the day's march, and that I intended leaving the tent soon.

'As long as the Mem sahib keeps well, everyone will be brave; but if she gets ill, all will give in,' said little Goboon, addressing me with a spasmodic twitching about the mouth, and a glistening eye.

Fanchyng was awake by this time, and sitting outside the tent with the rest, looking terribly worn, poor girl, by her long night of agony and suspense. Presently she uttered a short, sharp cry, and springing to her feet, exclaimed, 'Oh! mem sahib, look!' and was off like an arrow. Her quick and eager eyes had descried her brother's form, standing amongst the little knot of men who were assembled round the watch-fire.

I did not see the greeting, but no doubt it was attended with great pulling of the ears and lolling of the tongue, and other odd demonstrations of welcome and delight, as the manner of these people is. But very soon I see F—— returning, followed by them both; the little lad, however, approaching shyly and timidly behind, whilst Fanchyng comes running towards me. 'Mem sahib! mem sahib!' she cried, the tears coursing each other down her cheeks from very gladness, 'had it not been for the

sahib, my brother must have perished: it was the fire that led him towards us.'

Alive to the poor fellow's necessities F—— at once sacrificed the fatted calf, to the extent of his limited resources, consisting of some rum and water and a few biscuits saved from various *chota hazrees*, all of which he eagerly devoured, and then related how he had managed to lose us:—Whilst ascending the snow-fields, with the camp, under Junnoo, he had suddenly been seized with giddiness, and gradually falling in the rear, had ultimately sunk from drowsiness, no doubt accelerated by the fever from which he had been suffering. A long line of coolies was still behind him, but, when at last he was able to rouse himself, he found that they had all passed on, and that he was alone.

By this time the fog had enveloped him completely, but keeping in the beaten track, and hastening *forwards*, as he thought, he hoped soon to overtake us; nor was it until he reached the rock where we had halted on our upward way, that the appalling fact dawned upon him that he had, on arousing himself from the state of lethargy into which he had fallen, mistaken his bearings, and been *retracing his steps the whole way*.

The fog then clearing for an instant showed him, by the position of the sun, that two hours must have elapsed since he sunk down on the snow; and having lost ground, he calculated that it might be six hours yet before he could reach Yangpoong, long before which time night

would have set in. As this, together with the possibility of his losing his way, and the state of weakness and exhaustion he was in, rendered it more than probable that he might not be able to reach so great a distance, and as in this case he would be certain to perish in the snow, he resolved upon returning to our old place of encampment below. He had his blanket across his shoulders, and steel for striking light in his pouch, and with these he knew that if he once reached a region where wood could be found, he should not be frozen although he might starve.

He was, however, unable to walk thus far. Footsore and weary, he crept at length under the shelter of a rock, and rolling himself up in his rug was soon fast asleep; nor did he awake till midnight, when he observed the reflexion of our watch-fire, and believing it to be that of a party of natives bound to or from Thibet, made for it as quickly as he was able in the darkness, hoping not only to get food but company also on his way back to Darjeeling. Journeying on for hours, guided solely by this beacon light, sometimes losing sight of it altogether, and then led onwards by its reflexion in the sky, he at last reached it, and to his great joy found it to be that of our camp.

'Self-preservation is the first law of Nature' (*vide* Copybook); nor does he appear to have bestowed a thought upon the anxiety we must feel for him, or the days of agonising, fruitless search we should have

instituted, had all things gone smoothly, and we had reached Yangpoong.

The little lad once safe and sound amongst us, we determined we would not inform C—— of our dreadful night of wakefulness and suspense, for now that it was all happily over there was no need to awaken his sympathies on our behalf by recounting miseries, and adding to his own, which were already sufficiently great.

Our hearts lightened of this one great load, I went, as soon as the sun had well risen, to ascertain the wants of our poor suffering ones, still waiting patiently outside. A tolerable fire had been made of small wood and brambles, which, having been scorched and dried by the frost, burnt brightly. Amongst the number waiting for medicine was little Rags, who had induced one of the others to help him along. Meanwhile F—— tore up what garments he could spare into long strips for bandages, and this done, we proceeded to attend to the sick and wounded in earnest. Several had large wounds in their feet and legs, to which we applied bandages, spread with cold cream, but by far the greater number were suffering from inflamed eyes, the eyelids absolutely exuding. These Tendook, who had come to our assistance, anointed with wild honey,

which F—— informed me in a confidential tone, like an 'Aside,' was a remedy in use amongst the ancient Greeks, who even believed it would restore sight to the blind. Tendook was very anxious to operate similarly on me—my eyes being also much inflamed—a kindly offer, however, which I need scarcely say I respectfully declined! All this time C——, some distance off, was busily occupied in making arrangements for the day's

march, in which the chuprassees were assisting, every one who could, lending a hand in packing, striking tents, &c., so many men being disabled.

The cold at this time was so intense that it is impossible to describe it; but it may be realised perhaps in some degree when I state that a cup of tea which our kind and thoughtful host sent into our tent for us, con-

gealing in a few minutes, became a solid lump of ice. Happily there was no wind whatever, or 'who could abide His frost?'

Whilst we were still attending to our invalids, Puglawallah came to tell us he had had no food all the previous day, the others having given him none of the sheep which C—— ordered to be slaughtered last night, for the general benefit of the camp. I fancy in these days that 'might is right,' and that the poor fellow is unable to hold his own with the strong, and assert his claim to an equal share. We had, unfortunately, nothing to give him, but referred him for redress to the *burra sahib*, who, out of the depths of his compassion, ordered another sheep to be killed; so that we have now only *one* left, and no rice or Indian corn whatever.

One of the very first things which we learnt on quitting our tent this morning was, that our Guide had decamped during the night, and having met in solemn conclave over the fire, C—— told us we must consequently relinquish all hope of ever reaching Yangpoong. None of our camp knew the way, and it would not only be a hazardous thing to endeavour to reach it in the absence of a guide, but in all probability our attempts would prove unsuccessful. Yet it was a fearful disappointment to us all, to give up the hope that had been leading us onwards for so many marches, and forego our intention of sacking the little village, in case supplies of food should not be awaiting us there.

To retrace our steps, therefore, as quickly as possible towards Mount Singaleelah, was now our only alternative. Kabjeh, a large village, lies within half a day's quick march of that mountain; and if it be looted—should things come to extremities, and food not reach us from any source before we get there—if we ever do—there would be enough live stock in it to keep them from starving, even if it contained a short supply of both rice and bhoota, as the old Soubah of Mongmoo had stated.

C—— also despatched two more men an hour ago, this time bearing a *letter* from himself to the Soubah, entreating him to send supplies to meet us at Mount Singaleelah, and requesting the messengers to travel night and day, till they should reach Mongmoo, and deliver the letter into the old man's own hands.

No fewer than eight men have now been sent in different directions on a similar errand without success; so that it was with small satisfaction that we received the information that these two last had been despatched likewise, having little confidence in the result of their mission.

About ten o'clock we managed to strike tents and make a start, the coolies suffering from inflamed eyes being led blindfolded by those who were well, many of whom might often be seen carrying double loads. Amongst the number I observed Catoo leading little Rags. Having taken off his own pugree and wrapped

it round the eyes of the latter, he was also carrying his load for him, and leading him along with the tenderness of a woman.

Inexpressibly sad was it to watch the progress of our pilgrim band throughout the day's march, and note their downcast, weary looks, and footsteps growing slower and slower each hour; the small quantity of food which C—— has it in his power to give them now, being barely sufficient to keep them alive in these inclement heights, with such fatiguing marches and comparatively heavy loads. Fortunately we had a little port wine with us, and this we administered to two or three, who had broken down completely on the way.

Just before nightfall, we reached a former place of encampment. By this time our tired men had lost all pluck; and when this is the case it is impossible to rouse, or do anything with them. We did our best, however, to make them understand that it is through no fault of ours that they are suffering hunger; our kind host had even given them the sheep which he had brought with him for our exclusive use, and they ought, on the contrary, to blame their own countrymen for having failed in their promises of sending

food to meet us at the various points along the route, as C—— had arranged with them before starting.

The maund of sea-biscuit (80 lbs.) which C—— brought as a substitute for bread, now comes in most opportunely, and is of the greatest service in our need, for at the end of the march he distributed one to each man. F—— also divided a small portion of rum between them—all he could possibly spare—without which, slight as both were, they would have had absolutely nothing, after their long journey. During the latter part of the way it had been snowing fast, and this made us feel thankful we had so promptly decided to return, as no doubt it was falling heavily on the mountains where we lost our way. Our tents once pitched, the coolies sat round their fires, whilst the snow-flakes covered them as with a mantle.

It is marvellous how at this period we contrived to keep up even a semblance of good spirits, neither of us giving way, or expressing the real feelings we possessed, in view of the danger now actually before us. C—— was particularly reticent. I think he felt that *our* courage depended in no small degree upon his keeping up his own; but I could read, by the deepening lines in his kind face, the anxiety he was undergoing, although he seldom if ever acknowledged it.

That night I had a ghastly dream. I saw a crowd of men and women, clothed in white, standing with pale sunken faces, on the brink of a broad dark river, whilst, in

the distance, others were being borne slowly along in white hearses, which deposited their living freight also by the side of the river. Asking one of them what it all meant, he told me they were waiting the tide's coming to bear them across to some other country; and then the river deepened and deepened, the forest was gradually submerged, and the water advancing nearer, at length swallowed up the very ground under my feet; then a boat came to my rescue, and I found myself being ferried over the broad dark river; and in my dream I repeated the last verse of one of Uhland's poems :—

Nimm, mir Fährmann, nimm die Miethe!
Die ich gerne dreifach biete;
Zween die mit mir überführen
Waren geistige Naturen.

Take, O Boatman! thrice thy fee;
Take! I give it willingly,
For, invisible to thee,
Spirits twain have crossed with me.

It was all a dream, yet it haunted me strangely long after, as dreams sometimes will.

CHAPTER XLII.

WE TAKE OUR BEARINGS AND FIND THE GUIDE MISLED US.

THE following morning everything was freezing hard, and the air biting; but the snow had ceased to fall. In this exposed position we found the cold much more intense than that of our previous night's bivouac, where, though at a greater elevation, we were enclosed by mountains on all sides. The recently fallen snow had cleared the atmosphere, and as I left my tent, the sun was rising; a fact I should not have guessed even—for the eastern horizon was cold and purple—had not Deodunga in the snow-girt west betrayed his approach. He was indeed invisible to us terrestrial beings; but upon the point of earth nearest to heaven, in vesture white, a veil of thinnest gossamer covering it like some goddess bride, he had already risen with glory. Deodunga arrayed in her spotless mantle had espied the proud conqueror afar off, in all his blazonry of crimson and gold, travelling majestically upwards to meet her, and was blushing at his approach; else had I not known of his arising, so full of darkness and gloom was all around. In a few minutes Junnoo's summit also was tinged with pink, whilst the gorge through which we journeyed hither was still

wrapped in solemn and unearthly shade, appearing within a stone's throw, although in reality we had made two marches since we left the base of Junnoo, and traversed it.

From this position, we could trace the whole of our downward way after leaving the snowy plain; and in an hour's time F—— and Tendook accompanied me to a spot above encampment, whence we had a still more ex-

tended view. Before us, in a northerly direction, lay all the lesser peaks west of Junnoo, their outlines very little changed by a nearer approach. From Darjeeling they do not form very conspicuous objects amongst the grand and majestic peaks which dominate them, but the principal landmark by which we knew our bearings, was that flattened and bowl-like mountain which I have previously mentioned, and which is impossible to mistake for any other. This we remembered passing close under, the day we were lost in the snow.

It became manifest therefore beyond all doubt, that we must really have gone through the Kanglanamo Pass after all. Had we not done so, we could not have approached Junnoo so closely. There lay our route mapped out before us, admitting of no mistake, for we recognised each little peak we passed, whilst traversing the snow-fields. We must, in short, not only have reached that plateau, upon which perpetual snow rests, but have gone considerably beyond it; and had we not been prevented from proceeding further, by scarcity of food and threatening weather—which rendered delay in those hungriest and coldest of regions extremely hazardous—we should soon no doubt have reached the glaciers, according to our original intention.

One thing at any rate is incontrovertible—we never could have reached Yangpoong by that route, having travelled in too westerly a direction, as will be seen by reference to the map; by which also it will appear, that to have reached that village we must have made a descent of many thousand feet, and crossed the river Rungbi, Yangpoong being situated on a mountain rising out of that valley, on the opposite side of the river. The dry bed of a stream, therefore, *which* we crossed the day we got up into snow, must have been that of the Yamgotcha; and the path my little Lepcha pointed out to me on our way, leading due east, was no doubt the one we ought to have taken after all. I believe most firmly therefore that the Guide purposely misled us, for surely

he must have known, by the configuration of the mountains, where we then were; whilst it will be remembered that, when we lost our bearings in the fog, he declared we were already in the *district of Yangpoong*.

Had we not trusted to his guidance, in all probability, we should, with Major Shirwill's map in our possession, have reached that place long ago, instead of being in this present strait. The fact of his having decamped, too, goes far to confirm our suspicions that he misled us intentionally. Had he merely lost his way, we should have pardoned him, for surely the most experienced guide might easily have done so, in such blinding mist as that which enveloped us. Besides, he was fully aware that a considerable 'backsheesh' awaited him; and knowing the disposition of these Nepaulese, I am convinced that nothing would have induced him to leave camp without at least trying to obtain it, had he not felt guilty, and dreaded punishment.

Descending to our tent we caught sight of C——'s tall military figure, standing in a long embroidered dressing-gown, looking like an Armenian priest, as he vigilantly superintended the cutting up and distribution of our last sheep, believing that the Bhootias as well as men of *caste*—viz. the plainsmen—generally appropriate all the largest and best portions themselves, and that the poor coolies have to be content with what they can get.

After this, seated round a large fire—for, thank God, there is no lack of wood, dead trees lying about in every

direction, some of which almost crumble at a touch, we talk as hopefully as we can of the future; but there is a feeling of chill at our hearts' core, only increased by the stern aspect of Nature around. Not a blade of grass is here, nothing but a scene of desolation; not a living bush or tree: and the dead ones, in every stage of slow decay, seem to tell of a withered past. Vigorous vegetation there once was; what can have caused its sudden arrest? What natural causes have been at work to prevent its growth? Whence has come this strange and cruel opposition to life? Is it due to some change of temperature, such as that which caused plants indigenous to the lowlands of Europe, during the glacial period of its history, to flee to Alpine regions, from the gradually increasing heat?

As we muse thus in silent wonder, the sun, now fully risen, makes Deodunga's pyramid of ice and snow sparkle like a magnificent gem. From this spot it again shows itself as a superb pile of surpassing grandeur, its triple peak piercing the very heavens like a wedge, forming the most perfectly pure, lovely, and ideal creation the mind of man can conceive. Well has it been named Deodunga, Mount of God; and as one gazes, the mind is impressed with something, even far beyond its beauty—a something differing from aught else, for the eye is resting on the culminating point of the earth's surface, on whose lone summit earliest breaks the dawn, and last lingers trace of day.

Glorious as are the incomings and outgoings of morn and eve on snow-clad mountains, I cannot help thinking at this moment, whilst gazing upon the loftiest of them all, how infinitely more pure and lovely is this majestic dome, so grandly solemn, wrapped in its robe of white; and also that it teaches greater lessons to the heart thus, than under the passionate and pathetic effects of sunrise and sunset, whose contrasts of resplendent colour, and livid death-like stillness, appeal to the emotions chiefly.

Waiting whilst tents are being struck, preparatory to the march, I occupy myself as usual, by endeavouring to make a little sketch of the surroundings of our encampment, on this occasion using boiling water for the purpose, F—— and C—— assisting by warming my palettes by the fire; but notwithstanding that I am sitting close to it myself, the paint freezes as I put it on, and instead of sinking into the paper it peels off in thin sheets of coloured ice!

CATOO.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WE TAKE STOCK OF OUR REMAINING PROVISIONS.

ANOTHER weary march, and yet another, brings us to our usual day of rest; but although it is Sunday, we have decided upon marching to-day, the first time we have done so since leaving home, always having given the 'seventh' to our poor folk as a day of repose, holding a short service for ourselves in the dining tent. Our beautiful and almost perfect Liturgy never seemed half so grand as at such times, for amidst these vast solitudes, no Sabbath bells are needed to raise the soul to a worshipful mood. Nature herself holds within them an eternal Sabbath, and worship is felt to be the 'reasonable service.'

We must, if possible, make a *forced* march to-day—accomplishing two in one—and reach Mount Singaleelah, even should night overtake us on the way. We shall be descending the whole distance fortunately, so that the fatigue of all will be greatly lessened; were it not so, I do not think the men in their weakened state could possibly carry their loads.

Encouraging the poor fellows as well as we can, we make a tolerably early start, following the same track

— scarcely perceptible now however — by which we came, making a slight détour in one place only, to save distance, which brought us to a weird valley, a very charnel-house and Aceldama of dead pines, which lay everywhere like prostrate giants where they fell, with nothing living around them but cold grey lichen, which incased everything. We passed the same ice-caves, silent and empty now, for the men plod onwards with a dull and steady tramp, too listless even to take rest in them, as they did on their way hither.

'Do you think food will reach us in time to prevent our men from starving?' I enquire of Tendook, who is walking by my side.

'Eh! Mem sahib, yes! if God wills,' he replied, in a sad, but resigned tone.

Reaching a mountain called Labing, we halt for an hour, and kindle a fire upon the blackened embers we left behind when camping here before. The grass is beginning to grow again where we trod it down, and the gay petals of the little mauve primrose, cushioning the ground in sheltered nooks amongst the stones, are holding up their heads to catch the light, and drink in the sunshine, whilst our people stand in silent and pathetic groups, with wistful faces, wondering, as I fancy, why *anything* should look cheerful, when they are so sad. Yet the sun shines as brightly, as if there was no such thing as sorrow, and pain, and hunger in the world.

Fanchyng not yet having lost her feverish symptoms,

Nimboo searches for a certain herb, which he says is believed by the Lepchas to be very beneficial in such cases, adding, that when we reach Pemionchi, if she is not well by that time, the Lamas will speedily charm her sickness away.

Here we take stock of our remaining resources, and find them to consist of twenty biscuits, one bottle of rum, and another of brandy. C—— still had in his possession some tinned provisions, which, had they been divided amongst the camp, would probably have yielded scarcely more than a mouthful to each man, so that to have done so would have been folly in the extreme, and we ourselves, left without the slightest food, must have been the first to perish, being less accustomed than they are to hardship and fatigue. Yet such is the kindness and benevolence of our host, that had there been sufficient to do them any lasting good, I feel sure he would have given it gladly and at once, without consideration for ourselves.

At this time nothing would have been easier to them than deserting us, and carrying away not only these few provisions, but our tents also, had they been so minded, in which case we must have perished inevitably; but, strange as it may seem, I do not think the idea even occurred to us, or we should naturally have taken precautions to prevent its possibility. Our safety, doubtless, mainly consisted in numbers, and in the presence of Tendook. It is no small boon to have the friendship of such a man,

surrounded as we are by Bhootias, who, I suspect, but for the wholesome fear they entertain of the English Government, would soon exterminate the Europeans resident at Darjeeling. As it is, they are not unfrequently given to poison those against whom they owe a grudge or possess feelings of animosity, doing so by the decoction of the seed of a plant called the *datura*, which they find in the jungle, and which leaves a deposit of a greenish colour when administered in liquid, by which it may often be detected. As a rule, however, they take care to give it in quantities not sufficient to prove fatal, but merely to create unpleasant sensations, amongst which are giddiness and a feeling of delirium.

Some few months before the time of which I write, one of my friends was suffering from a malady for several weeks, the nature of which puzzled everyone completely. At length it was suspected that it was due to poison; and the deposit I have referred to having been detected in some tea that was brought expressly for her, an investigation followed, at which all the servants were summoned. I was present on the occasion, and shall not soon forget the attitude and significant speech of the cook, a powerful Bhootia, and a magnificent fellow in stature, standing six and a half feet high, with shoulders broad in proportion, who, with arms folded, and looks calm and defiant, addressing the master of the house, said:

'Do you think, Sahib, if we wanted to get rid of you, we should resort to such small means as that? Ooh!'

he continued, shrugging his shoulders, 'we should cut your heads off at once.'

From this spot we look down upon a chaos of upheaved rock, boulder upon boulder of gigantic dimensions flung together, each telling its own tale of wars and convulsions, in the world's early history. One could scarcely help fancying that earth-spirits, or gnomes, had been fighting with each other, and had left the relics of their warfare behind; whilst clouds, floating here and there, getting entangled amongst them, seem held as in their very teeth. In other places, cumuli, hanging beneath the mountain summits, alike take shape and form, and throwing wild and elf-like shadows, seem beckoning me to follow in their wake.

Then once more starting on our way, we wander on, till we enter a belt of juniper-trees, feathered with newly fallen snow, their branches drooping from its weight; and Kinchinjunga is again before us. But the mountains I loved so well have scarce gleam or glory now: the deep sorrow I feel for the poor men whose footsteps we follow, hunger written in their sunken faces, have well-nigh robbed them of their beauty.

We have all a vague idea that Mother Earth sympathises with her children—that when they are sad she smiles not at all, or with a more tender and chastened radiance: but it is a false glamour, whatever poets may say to the contrary, and these grim and lifeless mountains, so mute and motionless, so cruel, and hard, and passion-

less, maintaining such stolid indifference, alike to storm and sunshine, sorrow and joy, seem in these days to crush my very soul. Their silence, too, and mute unconcern, are almost unbearable when one feels as though the very stones should cry out as we pass.

Journeying on with heavy footsteps we reached the outskirts of an enchanted forest; for these mountaineers have their folklore, as we have seen, peopling not only rocky fastnesses, but woods also, with spirits of good and ill, bearing witness to the desire they entertain in common with all other nations of bridging over the border-land between this and that other world, as well as to the awe in which all alike regard the unseen. Through this they passed, not singly, but in companies, and the wind within its labyrinths sang a solemn dirge, and came moaning and wailing like a banshee. My dandy-bearers, calling my attention to it, said it was the voice of the air-god. It blew the little pine spikes in our faces all one way, like tears; and over the ancient rocks that lay along our pathway like giant tombs, the fir-trees bowed their heads, and for once all Nature seemed in harmony with our mood.

Overtaking the man who was carrying our store of food, C—— doled out half a biscuit to each of my bearers. Proceeding a little further, we came upon a baggage coolie lying on the ground in a perfectly exhausted state, and unable to bring on his load. We gave him a little wine we happened to have in our flask, which

revived him somewhat; and then bidding one of my dandy-men carry his load, and Hatti to help him along, we brought him with us, fearing to leave him behind.

It was truly pitiful in these hours to hear the poor fellows rallying each other. 'Don't give in,' they would say; 'when we reach Mount Singaleelah we will devour a maund of rice apiece.'

In his great but unspoken anxiety, C—— sent another man, at dawn to-day, to entreat those despatched yesterday, for Heaven's sake, to hasten back with food, if they could but obtain it from the Soubah.

CHAPTER XLIV.

RENEWED DISAPPOINTMENT.

THESE nomad tribes, when travelling in uninhabited wilds such as these, and running short of provisions, can often subsist almost wholly on the young and succulent shoots of the bamboo, as well as wild rhubarb and other plants. At this time of the year, however, none of these are to be found: but the last few miles we observed something growing, the leaves of which resembled those of the parsnip. C—— dug one up, and the root appeared very like it also. The existence of this herb, of which we remembered having seen a great deal near Mount Singaleelah, gave us some slight hope in case things came to extremities. As for myself, I almost felt that we had found 'manna in the wilderness,' until Tendook assured me that the Lepchas, who know the qualities of every plant to be found, had declared it to be unfit for food, if not altogether poisonous. We do feel almost certain, however, that we shall find provisions awaiting us on arrival at camp this evening, and with this hope we try to quicken the steps of our men.

The frost has been tightening over the land since we passed it, not long ago: the leaves have been crisping and falling—the red and sienna-coloured leaves of the wild cherry—and form a rustling carpet of divers colours. The mountain streams, which rang silvery chimes of welcome on our upward way, are silent now, held in tight grasp by the fingers of the ice-king; and the tall dry leafless spikes of the aconite tear the coolies' clothes as they lunge heedlessly along, scratching their feet even more than the fragments of slate; whilst the whitened and frost-stricken rhododendron leaves hang down and nestle together over the stems, as if to try and keep each other warm.

But I will not describe our march further, as we thus ingloriously retrace our steps. Suffice it to say that, after an unutterably weary tramp of nine hours, during which, but for the feeling of terrible responsibility laid upon us in the lives of our retinue, I at any rate must have sunk from weariness of mind and body, we arrived, just before nightfall, at the summit of the precipice above Mount Singaleelah, which I described as having ascended on Hatti's back on our way hither, and the descent of which, in the gathering darkness, became a perilous proceeding.

Looking eagerly over the ridge of the mountain, we saw that some persons had already reached our old camping place, for fires were burning. By these indications we trusted that a goodly number had come to anchor there, or perhaps—and our hearts beat high at

the thought—they might at last be the messengers arrived from Mongmoo with food.

Our hopes, however, were again doomed to bitter disappointment, for on descending we found that no food, alas! had come, nor any news as to the cause of delay in the return of our men, sent ages ago, as it seemed, from this place to the Kajee. The persons who had kindled fires were merely Teadook's followers, who we all along suspected were not quite in such severe straits as our own—a suspicion which we now find to have been well grounded, from the fact of their being occupied in parching Indian corn when we arrived, showing that they still have something left. They were, besides, able to come on more quickly than our own men, nearly all of whom we had been obliged to leave behind, one by one lagging in the rear; and exhausted and tired as we were ourselves, we had to wait their arrival for tents and everything else that we needed.

The last few miles of their march would lead them over uneven ground, through dense forest of rhododendron, and, worse still, in some places through the denser forest of the hill bamboo. Darkness had already enclosed us, and our great fear was lest, if it overtook them in one of these forests, they would be unable to grope their way out and reach us. We could only account for their lingering so long behind us by this supposition, or by the even graver fear that they had completely broken down on the road. Throwing ourselves on the ground by the

fire, we sat watching hour after hour beneath the stars, which looked down upon us meekly, glistening like eyes filled with tears.

To complete our wretchedness, were anything needed, a thick fog now came on; and Tendook and his people, standing at the foot of the precipice, began making by turns that peculiar and wild Lepcha call which I have described elsewhere, hoping to attract the attention of the wanderers, who would now be unable to *see* their way along, and lead them nearer us for succour.

The shout resounded again and again, as the wave of sound was caught by the swelling buttresses of the Singaleelah Range, till, growing fainter and fainter as it travelled onwards, it died away in the distance. Although it could have been heard for many miles, no answer reached us save the echo, sent back from rock to rock, that only seemed to mock us like the demons, which by small effort of the imagination might be supposed to inhabit these mountain fastnesses.

By this time our fires began to wane, but we would not have them replenished, lest the crackling of the wood should prevent our hearing voices in the distance, as we still sat listening for the faintest sound that indicated the approach of any of the benighted travellers, whom may God in His mercy help!

At length, after one more shout from Tendook, we thought we actually *did* hear a distant sound like that of a response; and when the echo of his own voice, which

confused the ear, had died away, the sound of many others afar off reached us. Thank God! Some, then, at any rate, if not all, were now within reach of help. But how could they descend the precipice? Accustomed even as they are to scrambling down these rocky declivities, none could escape a broken neck in the darkness. Dear old Tendook, however, alive to every emergency, in an instant summoned his little band of men and ordered them to make torches.

A great quantity of bamboo cane was lying about the ground, left from our last bivouac here. In less time than it takes to describe, this was collected together and laid in a heap before the fire, after they had first thrown some upon it, to create a flame to enable them to see. Each man then split the canes into four with his 'kookrie' or 'ban,' and bound them together in bundles about seven feet long, in readiness to be lighted.

Now arose a noisy discussion as to who amongst them should go to the rescue. The rock and its fastnesses are well known to be the haunt of bears, and none were willing to venture up at that time of night. Never can I forget the scene which followed. Forcing his way through the group of cowardly menials, the sweet supple-limbed and manly Goboon appeared, and without uttering a single word took up a torch, lighted it, and placing another unlighted on his left shoulder, his head erect, his red tunic swaying at each movement of his graceful figure, and his face wearing an almost sublime

expression, manfully threaded his way into the darkness alone. It was an instance of heroic daring, noble courage, and self-reliance for one so young, that made me sorry he was not destined for higher things, and reminded me of the youthful champion of Israel going forth to meet Goliath of Gath; and very touching was it to us all, whose minds were already overstrained by fatigue and anxiety, to see this plucky, gallant little lad marshalling stalwart Goorkhas to the help of those in distress. Many followed his example, and we watched the lights winding up and up between the rocks, and glimmering faintly through the mist, till they disappeared at length over the summit of the mountain.

Surely 'patience will have its perfect work' in us. Yet another hour's watching, which seemed a whole livelong, weary, anxious night, before any sound reached us; and then, hearing shouts from a distance, faintly answered from a greater distance still, we guessed that Goboon and his followers had only now lighted on the poor fellows to whose relief they had gone. Presently, a little light, flickering dimly through the mist, was seen above the mountain ridge. On it came, slowly but surely. It was Goboon, but alas! bringing only eleven of our men, the coolies carrying tents being still behind. There was, consequently, little chance of our doing more than reclining before the camp fire for the rest of the night. But we had long ago ceased to heed trifles, and thought not of ourselves, but

only of the poor men whom we had so unwittingly exposed to such dangers.

Meanwhile Tendook and his people still continued shouting below the rock, and the dreary monotony of the sound, so plaintive and prolonged, 'Hoo-hoo! hoo-hoo—o—o—o!' was such that at last, worn out by fatigue and anxiety, we had nearly subsided into slumber, having given up all expectation of more men reaching us before morning, when towards midnight the call was again answered, and Goboon and his chosen few once more hurried off with flambeaux which had previously been made in readiness. The night, happily, by this time was bright starlight, although moonless, all signs of fog having disappeared.

Presently a little twinkling star showed itself just above the black outline of the mountain top. So tiny was it that we could not for an instant tell whether it were of earth or sky; then another and another: on they came—a whole constellation of them—till the sound of many voices reached us, from which we augured that all must be arriving. Lighting another torch, we went to meet them, with a welcome too deep for utterance, for we seemed linked together in one common brotherhood by the suffering we had all alike to endure.

We had been too sanguine, however: they were C——'s men only; Catoo, in charge of ours, being still behind, and these had not been heard of by any who had hitherto arrived. We passed them ourselves shortly

after leaving Labing, where we halted about noon. They were then sitting down perfectly exhausted, and Catoo was vainly endeavouring to urge them to resume their loads and follow the rest. As they had not arrived, therefore, we were compelled to relinquish all hope of their reaching us before the morning, and our anxiety about them was intense.

C—— and F—— now collected together whatever rum and brandy there remained, and, mixing both together with hot water, called all the shivering wretches round them, and doled out to each man about half a wine-glassful; whilst Tendook and I, at C——'s request, stood at convenient angles, watching narrowly to prevent the possibility of anyone presenting himself for the purpose a second time.

And there they stood a silent mass of men, each waiting his turn, their sad faces lit up by the flaming torch-light. Strange wistful eyes gazed into ours with a vague but passionate yearning, as if asking some question, and then looking off again with an expression of disappointment, like those who expected answer, but found none! and truly there was no indication of hope in our faces, in which despair alone was written. How could it be otherwise, with such a load of care filling our hearts?

The scene was affecting and solemn. None spoke or uttered a sound, whilst C—— apportioned carefully to each man his share; and the knowledge that this was almost the last nourishment of any kind he had to bestow, unde-

monstrative as he always was, I could yet see, touched him deeply. A handful of biscuits was still left, but these he wisely withheld till the morrow, that all might have a mouthful wherewith to begin the march.

Then, amidst the great stillness, C——'s voice was

heard, bidding them one and all keep up courage yet a little longer; after which all went silently away.

The little that we *could* do for our poor men having been done, we sat some time longer round the waning fire talking; and then we realised to the full, that from the first we had been leaning on a broken reed, and that it was by trusting to the faithfulness of these Kajees and Soubahs, that we had brought ourselves and followers into this terrible strait.

C——'s tent having arrived, he insisted on our occupying it for the remainder of the night, appropriating to his own use the little commissariat tent; and his men being too exhausted, those of Tendook had pitched it for us. In a few minutes F—— was fast asleep, with no trace of sorrow or anxiety on his placid upturned face; but I did not lie down that night, but sat up, eagerly listening for the sound of footsteps ascending the valley, still entertaining a lingering hope that food might reach us from Mongmoo before dawn.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DRIPPING FOREST.

MORNING broke with the same result. Anxiety seems now to be the litany of our lives, for disappointed hopes come each day with a cruel and terrible persistency; and F—— and I ask each other, wonderingly, is the old Soubah playing us false, as well as the Kajee of Yangting? The messenger last sent was a constable, yet not *one* has returned to tell the tale.

Quitting the tent as soon as we were able to grope our way out, we found C—— already up and talking earnestly to Tendook, the former of whom told us that he had determined upon starting the very earliest possible moment for Mongmoo, to have a personal interview with the Soubah himself.

Only one thing remained to be done before leaving us, and that was, to ransack the empty provision baskets, to see whether anything was hidden amongst the straw. This resulted in the discovery of two pint bottles of beer, a tin of mustard, and the bottle of wild honey the old Soubah had given us when we last encamped here. Besides which there was also a small quantity of the compound saved from the distribution of last night.

'These ingredients, being mixed with as much mustard as could be swallowed—for we could not afford even to waste this—C—— came to F——, who was trying to evade him, and asked whether he was quite sure he had no more rum?

'No,' replied F——, 'I have given you the last drop.'

'Nor brandy?' he demanded.

'None,' was F——'s rejoinder, 'except'—a pause. 'None, that is, except the little I have in my pocket-flask; and surely we must keep that, in case any poor fellow be found fainting by the way.'

But C——'s importunity prevailing, F—— retired to the tent to fetch it; and after this was added to the rest, with sufficient hot water to make a warm comforting drink, the poor weary disheartened men were once more summoned, the greater number responding, not readily, as we naturally expected they would do, but as if they would infinitely have preferred being left undisturbed.

Strange to say, reduced as they all were to famine-point, the Nepaulese refused it, saying that to do so would break their caste; albeit they partook of it to a man last night, under cover of the darkness.

'Not drink it!' exclaimed C——; 'why, you all *did* last night; it's only medicine.'

'To be sure,' chimed in Tendook, 'of course it's medicine: who ever heard of drinking spirit in such small quantities?'—alluding to murwa, the only alcohol

with which they are familiar, and which, as I have said, the Bhootias and Lepchas take in large quantities.[1]

Tendook's rejoinder, however, had the desired effect, for one and all came forward, and drank their share. The biscuits were next carefully divided, amounting to half a one each. This, with the warm drink, seemed to give them a slight stimulus to exertion, for they soon began packing up their loads, preparatory to the march.

Going up to them, C—— then explained the object of his early departure—viz. to hasten to Mongmoo, and, if possible, bring food back bodily to meet them; at the same time giving them permission to sack any village they might come to on the way thither—a permission I fancy they would not be slow to avail themselves of, should the opportunity occur.

Soon after his departure, we were cheered by the arrival of Catoo and our little band of men, whom at one moment we feared we should have to leave behind. They had, it seems, bivouacked for the night in a forest of bamboo, and started at break of day. We were unable to give these poor fellows anything whatever, and as they were absent at the distribution of the previous night, they had not of course had a share of the scanty sustenance of which even the others had partaken. Their exhaustion was extreme.

[1] Hindoos will never object to take *medicine* from our hands, although they would break their caste by drinking anything else we might offer them.

Whilst helping to pack up tents, &c., a chuprassee came to us saying that one of the coolies had robbed Pugla-wallah of his portion of rum last evening, as well as of his biscuit this morning. The poor fellow is in no worse case than Catoo's party; but he is a weakly man, physically as well as mentally, and in the matter of food, I strongly suspect, has been treated badly ever since we left Darjeeling.

Taking care that no one is left behind, and making my dandy-bearers carry the loads of Catoo's band, who are reduced to so great a state of weakness as to be utterly incapable of doing so themselves, I walk with F——'s assistance; and we are soon descending to the lovely valley which lies stretched at our feet, and winding our way once more beneath noble forest trees, giant rhododendrons, firs, and the lofty sol. We are here at the cradle of the infant Kullait, and are followed by the never-ceasing music of mountain streams, no longer silent, for they are below the dominion of the ice-king, and are hurrying off with sweet sprinklings of sound, to swell noble rivers far beneath. Presently the voice of greater waters reached us, and a torrent foaming on either side seemed nearing us as it fell; whilst an opening in the foliage here and there displayed them plunging over moss covered boulders, forming an exquisite combination of 'wood and rock and falling water.' How pleasant it is to be once more in the midst of soft vegetation and fertilising streams, after witnessing Nature for so long a

time in her austere moods in the frost-bound region we have quitted!

Behind came Tendook, helping those who most needed help, while below, the baggage coolies descended in irregular groups, with footsteps slow and weary. At length we saw one lying on the path with his face towards the ground: hastening up we tried to arouse him, but with the roar of waters near us, could hear no answer, and knew not whether he were dead or alive. Raising his head, however, we discovered that he was none other than poor Pugla-wallah, who had apparently fainted.

'God is just,' exclaimed Tendook, in his vernacular, as he sat down and laid the poor wan face on his knee.

Not knowing what to do to revive the poor fellow, we bitterly regretted having no brandy with us; but at that instant, as if by inspiration, it occurred to me that there ought to be a small quantity of port wine in one of the bottles of my travelling bag, which I had on one occasion taken with me when going on in advance of the camp, but had not made use of; and, on searching, to my great delight, there it was.

Parting his lips, Tendook poured a little down his throat. He had only fainted from exhaustion, for he soon opened his eyes, and showed other signs of returning consciousness; and after swallowing the whole, he was able to sit up, and soon sufficiently restored, with Hatti's assistance, to walk, my little friend Rags carrying his load;

but we were very frequently obliged to halt, not only to give Pugla-wallah rest, but to arouse others whom we often overtook lying helplessly on the ground, for we dare leave none behind. Then how piteous was it to see them make one more effort, and, moaning, take up their loads and journey on again!

Until this moment I had been walking; but summoning the strongest of my bearers, I urged them to endeavour to carry me, if but for a short distance, feeling that I was myself breaking down, and should soon be unable to proceed another step.

The torrents which had been approaching each other nearer and nearer now ceased to roar, and uniting, formed themselves into a broad and placid river, whose dark surface was disturbed scarcely by a ripple. Through the valley the wind blew with cutting force, and shook the branches; but they admitted no sunbeam, as they swayed their arms above us. A little lower still, and everything reeking with moisture dripped upon us as we passed, whilst, to add to the gloom, thick vapour following the windings of the river hung in heavy masses below the topmost branches of the trees.

Quite beyond the power of language is it to describe the gloom of this all but impenetrable forest, in which vegetation was marvellously rank; the portions of fallen rock also which lay along our pathway, covered with a black and slimy lichen, formed themselves into natural grottoes, whence water trickled perpetually. F——,

taking off his overcoat, now threw it across my shoulders, for the air was chilling to the bone; and coming to a solitary hut, we took refuge in it for awhile. The roof and posts supporting it were covered with moss, fungus, and every kind of moist vegetation, and it must have been deserted long ago; but to us, who had travelled so many weary miles without coming across the semblance of man's existence past or present, it had an appearance of almost positive 'habitation.'

But for the plaintive and half-suppressed groans of our pilgrim band, not a sound broke the stillness of the woods, save the river, which whispered to us in soft and pathetic cadence, as we crept along its margin. Sometimes, in language all its own, it seemed leading us onwards with words of comfort. And the hope it inspired was no delusive one, for distant shouts soon reached us, growing louder and louder each moment, till from out the gloom we recognised C——'s tall form approaching with rapid strides, waving his hat on high, and we felt sure that relief at last had come.

In another instant he and little Goboon were at our side, and told us how that on the way they had met the messengers sent to Mongmoo returning with the long-looked-for food. On hearing this, the poor starving fellows one and all dashed their loads to the ground, in a manner by no means conducive to the well-being of their contents.

'Hurrah!' cried one; 'no more dying, food has come.'

At the same time my bearers, apparently forgetting in their excitement that I was a living load, gave me a toss in the air, the last effort of which I fancy they were capable, and then allowed me to follow the laws of gravitation unaided, and find my own level on the ground.

They now proceeded to collect wood, and arranging themselves in groups, each made his own fire, in anticipation of the food, which, thank God! was now so soon to reach them; and by the time they were alight—for the moss and sticks being damp, it was rather a slow process—our eyes were gladdened by the sight of the men coming hurriedly along with baskets laden with rice, Indian corn, and other articles of food, and between seventy and eighty famishing people ate to their fill and were satisfied.

Thus at length came the glad hour that put away our fears. But great happiness, coming suddenly and unexpectedly on great sorrow, is almost pain at first; and the change from despair to complete relief was more than we could well bear, as, seating ourselves upon a fallen tree, we watched our people with moistened eye and feelings too deep for speech. The sombre shade, the picturesque groups of figures, the smoke wreathing upwards in all directions through the trees, the heaving vapour, dragged into fragments by the waving branches which dripped with moisture, the silent river flowing in one broad sheet of crystal, not a ripple on its bosom —all forming a combination so strangely weird, and at

the same time so placid and full of calm repose, presented a sight never to be forgotten while memory lasts.

The hunger of our camp appeased, they gathered together in little knots, recounting over and over again their past fears, and dwelling on present happiness; how that they thought it was 'decreed' that they should starve in the mountains; but that now they were to live, and eat and drink and be merry.

Ay, and they were merry, for C——, having ascertained that they had rested sufficiently, and giving signal for departure, the coolies cheerfully resumed their loads; and mirth and joy, to which they had long been strangers, once more took possession of them all. Resounding through the forest were jocund voices far and near: and Nautch wallah, catching the contagion, could be seen again indulging in an imposing war-dance, his supple zig-zag figure gyrating as of old, only wanting goat's feet in the place of mocassins, and a pair of horns instead of the wisp of hair peering through his conical cap, to make him a first-rate satyr.

Having descended at least 5,000 feet since leaving Mount Singaleelah, we were now below the region of

cloud, and the forest, though dense as ever, wore a totally different aspect. Our senses, too, under altered feelings, were suddenly kindled to the fair and gentle beauty of the scene; 'for lo! the winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of singing of birds is come.'

None of the trees at this elevation are deciduous, and a lap of soft and living green lies stretched above and around us. From the loftiest tree, with its graceful parasite and glorious orchids, to the ferns and mosses we tread beneath our feet, there is no sign of the 'sere and yellow leaf.' Does Nature never decay in this fair Eden? Is it one perpetual burst of undying spring, as on the first Sabbath of the world's history, when God

rested from His labours, and 'behold, everything was very good'?

The plaintive and soothing note of the kökra now greets us, and the forest is tuneful with the joyous melody of other birds; the river too becomes once more a foaming torrent, lashing itself into spray as it plunges over boulders of gneiss, whilst here and there, forming deep green pools, it sleeps to the music of its own lullaby. Following its banks for another hour, we came upon evidences of man's existence in traps to catch fish; and beneath these traps, which are long fences of bamboo spanning the river, were singular conical baskets, which Tendook informed me were placed there to catch edible frogs.

The woods now began to be alive with sunshine, as golden arrows pierced the leafy canopy; and soon emerging upon the open, we found ourselves again in the haunts of men, and amongst gentle acclivities planted with millet and buckwheat, all aglow with wild flowers, and higher up smiling patches of Indian corn, still shimmering in the mellow sunlight.

Slowly ascending these sunny uplands, the tremulous and yellow glare of day gradually gave place to softer tints of evening; shadows lengthened across our pathway, and the sun began to sink behind the mountains. No wonder that, in the childhood of the world, man fixed his paradise in the golden West, the 'land of the setting sun.' There, near glittering shores, little crimson and

gold-flecked clouds lay, floating like ships at anchor in a sea of glory; broad arrows of dazzling light—his last adieu—shot upwards as the orb of day sank deeper below the horizon; then came a saddening and subduing of its brightness, followed by the magic afterglow, in which the sky was filled with saffron melting into green, thence into rose, till all faded into peaceful and ethereal blue.

'Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain,' soliloquised F——. And, living day after day amongst Nature one learns to see of a truth, if one never knew it before, that 'the brush that paints the skies is not that of an artist who paints at random.'

'No,' added C—— solemnly, turning round and gazing towards the west, still filled with an Elysian brightness; 'it is an Apocalypse in God's own writing.'.

And conversing thus, the still and solemn twilight closes over us, bringing with it thoughts of the morrow; —not that morrow we shall awaken to in this life, but that more glorious one, when, our 'little day' having reached its close, the weariness and toil and difficulties of life's journey will be hushed in the happiness and peace of a long eternity.

CHAPTER XLVI.

KABJEE.

DARKNESS had almost overtaken us before we reached the thickly populated little village of Kabjee. Every man, woman, and child—if we might judge from their number, and the comparatively few huts which seemed to contain them—turned out in wondering expectation to see us; the women and children wearing the unpicturesque 'saree' of the plains, which is nothing more nor less than a sheet made to envelope the figure from head to foot. Dogs either barked furiously or set up a piteous howl as we approached; and everything betokened general disturbance and *bouleversement*, our advent altogether seeming to be resented as an intrusion.

Pioneered by Catoo, who met us at the entrance of the village, we arrived at length at a small patch of grazing ground, enclosed with wormwood bushes, which at this elevation grow to a height of eight or ten feet. Here our tents were already pitched, to the evident astonishment of the people, the women especially, who, hiding themselves in the copse, peered at us in solemn and silent wonder, and apparently with no small fear.

There were a number of cows near us; but although we had intruded ourselves upon their especial domain, they only looked at us with large meek eyes, stopping to chew the cud now and then, but feeling far too lazy seemingly to wonder very much at anything.

Whilst our people were lighting fires, &c., C——, shouldering his gun, sallied forth to the village to see what he could obtain for dinner, and observing some *moorghees* within the enclosure of one of the huts as he passed through, he essayed to become their happy possessor. On presenting himself at the door of the hut, however, he found it to be that of no less a person than the chief or 'head-man,' to whom he confided his wishes; at which the old fellow, shaking his head, assured him that they were consecrated to his deity, and that consequently he could not have them. Whereupon C—— informed him that, as far as his own feelings were concerned, the fact he mentioned was no objection whatever, adding that, much as he regretted to hear it on his—the chief's—account, he meant to have them notwithstanding. There was also a fat young kid within the hut, which C—— intimated he would like as well, upon which he was met with a yet more indignant refusal, the old man, shaking his head more violently than before, declaring that this also was consecrated to the Deity.

C——, however, throwing down three times their value in silver coin, displayed his gun, signifying thereby that, unless supplies were forthcoming at once, he would

be under the painful necessity of taking them by force,—a mode of reasoning which was followed by the happiest results; for both the kid and *moorghees* were borne away in triumph by C——, and handed over to the tender mercies of the 'bāwārchi,' who soon sacrificed them to gods terrestrial instead.

Details such as these are to my mind the most painful belonging to camp life. Careful as one ever is to avoid them, sights and sounds will occasionally obtrude themselves; and I must confess that, hungry as I have often been after a long day's march, I have found it very difficult—having caught sight of the shepherd leading one of our little flock to the slaughter *in* the morning—to 'return to our mutton' with anything like an appetite *in* the evening.

The Kabjeeites, finding at length that we were a just and generous people, intending to pay liberally for what we obtained—which I fancy is the reverse of their experience, in a country where 'might' to a great extent overrules 'right,'—timid black-eyed Susans came offering eggs for sale; whilst others brought milk and honey, with which this land seems literally overflowing. They also produced untempting-looking butter, which they presented in a plantain-leaf, in the absence of a more 'lordly dish,' and we might soon have possessed ourselves of a sufficiency *of* everything for the remainder of the journey, had we so chosen; but provision for more than our wants from day to day is now happily unnecessary, as

we shall henceforth be near enough to villages, to replenish our stores at the end of almost each day's march.

Dinner over, and the *moorghee* disposed of, we sit round the fire as usual, but more from habit than necessity, being now at a comparatively warm altitude. Our surroundings, however, are very singular, and by no means reassuring as evening wears on, the wormwood copse concealing numerous huts, whose existence we discover only by the columns of smoke, which now begin almost to suffocate us; whilst the red glare of the fires, seen through the bushes in every direction, not only amongst the wormwood, but all up the hill-side, and the black figures, half hidden, half seen, as they stand or squat before them, look more demoniacal and witch-like than I can describe.

Knowing the habits of the natives, and how they turn night into day, we entertain small hopes of sleep. They have already begun their orgies, and our camp, bivouacked in various parts of the village, seem also to have made up their minds to have 'a night of it,' and to keep festival together, for they are already shouting and singing in a very inharmonious manner. I dare say the poor fellows are making up for their long fast, as well as partaking rather too freely of the intoxicating *murwa*. But little Rags, as is his wont, refusing to join the festive throng, sits apart from the rest, and once more tells his love to the listening stars; and a very hopeless one it must be,

judging from the plaintive strains he produces,—a great contrast to the wild Thibetan songs with which the rest are favouring us.

There is nothing more characteristic of the prevailing feelings and habits of a people than their music. Thus that of the Bhootias and Nepaulese is essentially a manly music, differing vastly from the nasal strains drawled out by the effeminate Plainsmen; whilst that of the Lepchas, as a purely nomad race, has naturally a softer and more plaintive character.

On entering our tent at an early hour, our expectations are fully realised, although in rather a different manner from that which we anticipated, for we find it overrun with monster caterpillars, which have already crawled over the mattresses and up the 'kernaughts.' As usual, F—— slept soundly after his long march, such slight disagreeables making small impression upon his slumbers; but I, unfortunately, am one whom a crumpled roseleaf would keep awake. Then more than one of the cows—which also seem to be bad sleepers—had bells round their necks, which kept up a constant tinkling the live-long night. 'Music hath charms,' but defend me from the companionship of a musical cow after a long day's march. They also came sniffing and snorting about us, poking their noses under the flaps, and sending in blasts of warm moist air, no doubt wondering what all this intrusion of foreign matter in their midst could possibly mean. In truth nothing ever really seems to sleep at night in India,

Towards the small hours we both heard, as we fancied, a very suspicious noise *within* the tent. From the first we had not taken kindly to the dwellers of this village, and opening his eyes, F—— saw by the feeble light afforded by the lantern a pair of legs, apparently belonging to some abominable wretch who was trying to conceal himself under his bed. Fully awake this time, he was up, and had seized his rifle, which was already loaded in readiness for any emergency that might arise. But magnanimously wishing to give him an opportunity of either making his escape, or coming to a hand-to-hand fight, he shouted to the owner of the legs in Hindustani, threatening to fire without further ceremony, unless he took himself off that instant. The owner of the legs, however—contrary to our expectations — appearing in no wise disconcerted by this appalling threat, we found, on closer and more calm examination, that they were no other than F——'s harmless moccassins, which had assumed such an alarming attitude when he released himself of them for the night. But altogether our first impressions of Kabjee are anything but pleasing.

Morning breaking, we partake of the usual 'Chota hazree,' and then stroll out to have a look at the village

and its inhabitants. The latter are very squalid and dirty, and I should say are anything but a thriving people. The huts, too, are of the very worst description, and as usual, fowls, goats, and pigs roam about the common apartment, and seem to live on affectionate terms with its dwellers. The village contains the usual number of cripples and impotent folk that one sees everywhere in the East, except in the higher elevations, where every kind of personal deformity is almost wholly unknown. They turn out to see us as we pass, and form a very motley and nondescript group.

By this time they have learnt to regard us as an unaggressive people; and a man standing outside invited us to enter his homestead. Several women and children were squatting behind the door as we entered, but, immediately on seeing us, scuttled away like so many mice. At the end of the apartment a large fire was burning on a stone hearth, on which sat an old veteran, watching the boiling of a pot; whilst beneath the ragged thatch were cross beams, from which quivers and sheaths for arrows were suspended; the arrows, which we examined afterwards, being barbed and poisoned.

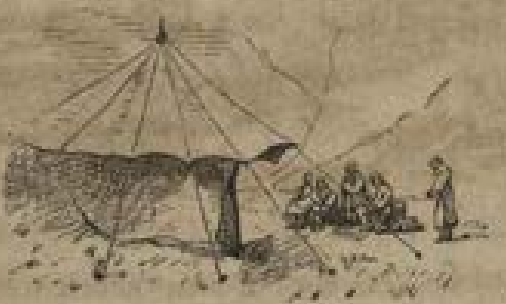
These semi-barbarians are evidently embued with notions of hospitality, for they offered us milk, as well as a leathery-looking compound very like *chupattee*. Looking over a hurdle, which barely divided them from the family mansion, we saw two yâks, beautiful creatures, the size of large oxen; their hair hanging to their flanks in

thick masses, and magnificent bushy tails, almost reaching to the ground, their ears being pierced and adorned with tassels of scarlet wool. The whole time we were looking at them they kept up a subdued chorus of short emphatic groans or grunts, a habit peculiar to all the bovine races in these hills. The inhabitants of the hut

then brought blankets for our inspection, which were made from the silky hair of these animals.

In appearance the people themselves are very different from both Bhootias and Lepchas, and, except that their complexion is fair, they resemble the Bengalee, strange as it may seem, both in dress and feature, far more than any of the hill tribes. Not only the women but the men also envelope themselves in a large coarse linen sheet, and I observed none of the pretty

striped woollen fabrics manufactured by the industrious Bhootias. Their customs, however, seemed to be similar to those of the hill people generally: for amongst other things I observed a churn for concocting that delicious compound tea-soup, such as I had seen in use at Darjeeling, and a stone for grinding dried milk, together with iron pipes for smoking 'Tseeang.' Discovering that F——was a smoker, they next pressed him, with genuine hospitality, to take a turn at the family 'hubble-bubble;' a favour, however, he politely declined, presenting them with some cigars instead, which they graciously deigned to accept.



CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SOUBAH INTRODUCES US TO HIS SMALL FAMILY.

NUMBERS turn out to witness the process of tent-striking at eleven o'clock, but taking care to stand at a safe and respectful distance, feeling a little afraid of us still. Old men and women, hobbling on sticks, come forth from their huts to see the show; and little children, led by almond-eyed mothers, to whom they cling half-affrighted, peep shyly from behind their '*sarees*,' and regard us with much the same curiosity and admiration as English children would evince at an itinerant menagerie, no doubt thinking we are a species of wild beast on ticket-of-leave, but on no account to be approached beyond certain limits.

All follow at a distance as we quit the village, and we soon begin to descend in an easterly direction to the valley of the Kullait, the roar of whose waters we had heard continually ever since leaving its banks yesterday. From this spot it flows on beneath the Pemionchi and Hee mountains for a further distance of twenty-six miles, and then falls into the great Rungheet.

We now find ourselves in the midst of cultivations of

sugar-cane, and pretty little patches of cotton surrounding tiny villages, which from afar look very snug and comfortable. Our advent to this part of the world has evidently been noised abroad, probably reaching them from Kabjee, for as we proceed we can descry the inhabitants in the distance assembled outside their huts, some standing on high balconies, whilst others have even climbed to the very top of the thatch, waiting to see us pass. As we approach, they view us with keen and wondering interest, staring at us just as doubtless we should have done had we been told that the Man-in-the-moon, or some other apocryphal creature we had heard of, but never believed in, had actually turned out to be real and was come to dwell among us. *I* am apparently the great object of attraction. An Englishman may possibly have been seen within the memory of the 'oldest inhabitant,' but the genus Englishwoman never.

Observing plantations of trees resembling the mulberry, Tendook, now quite at home in his own country, informs me that it is *ting*, from which the poison is extracted by which they catch fish. Scrambling down through fields of sugar-cane, we cut the ripe and succulent sticks, the juice of which is deliciously refreshing; and everyone, even my dandy-bearers, may be seen either chewing the cud of reflection, or struggling with the luscious cane, which being stringy is not perhaps exactly the thing one would care as a rule to partake of

in public; moreover it is not easy to be conversational when tugging away at it.

'Stop!' cries F——, similarly occupied, making frantic efforts to sever the irresistible cane he is masticating, and render himself intelligible: 'there's a great hole in front of you, and those fellows eating their sugar-cane don't see where they are going!'

Following the banks of the river, we soon cross two waterfalls over frail bridges constructed of saplings tied together, and arrive at another hamlet, where the inhabitants are waiting to receive us with much pomp and

ceremony. Three quaint-looking old men coming forward present C—— with eggs, rice, and fruit, in quaintly-carved wooden platters; and I certainly never beheld, and may I never behold again, such grotesque and skeleton-like men in the flesh, or any so hopelessly 'out of drawing.' They

reminded me forcibly of the *bassi-relievi* in the British Museum, their joints all seeming to turn the wrong way, and their limbs, instead of working in concert as members of one body should, apparently wanting to go in contrary directions at the same moment; progress consequently was anything but a graceful or easy task. On looking at them it was impossible to help fancying that they were originally an 'odd lot' in Nature's workshop, only put together as an economical arrangement, that nothing might be wasted.

One of them, a man with a face like a shrivelled chrysalis, after following my dandy for a considerable distance, and gazing at me intently the while, at length enquired of the bearers, his hands clasped in an attitude of supplication,—

'Who *are* these, and *what* have they come for?'

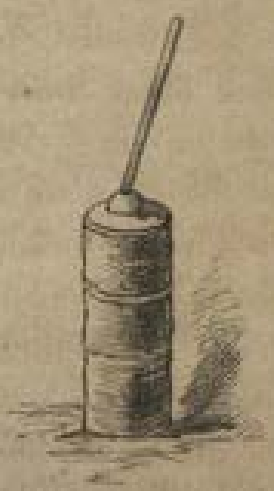
'Who are they? why, two great English sahibs and a mem sahib, sister of the Maharanee (Queen),' exclaimed Nautch-wallah, grandiloquently, who probably thought he would shine by a reflected glory.

'A *mem sahib*!' I hear him repeat, wonderingly, to himself, as though he could not quite make up his mind what sort of animal it could be; 'but *which* of the three is the mem sahib?' And it was curious to observe how they all talked about me, just as if I had been deaf.

We now come upon two singular little temples surrounded by inscriptions, and after crossing the river, climb the opposite mountain through scorching sunshine,

and see a short distance before us a large number of people in gay attire, consisting, to our great surprise, of our old friend the Soubah of Mongmoo and his attendants, who have come to bid us welcome at the entrance of his domain.

With low salaams, three out of the number, who have manifestly been told off with great solemnity for the purpose, approach and present us severally with a curious wooden machine, not unlike a small churn, containing a hot liquid which we are sorely puzzled to know what to do with; but Tendook, as usual, coming to the rescue, informs us that it is *murwa*, and that we must suck it through the little bamboo tube in the centre, as one does 'sherry-cobbler.' Here for the first time we make acquaintance with that fascinating and insidious beverage, which, warm as it was, we found particularly refreshing after our exertions, tasting rather like sherry negus, only more acid. Its appearance, however, is that of milk, with small brown seeds in it.



When this 'function' was at an end, the Soubah, dressed for the occasion in a gorgeous habiliment of olive-green satin, headed the procession to the borders of his estate. It was impossible to help being struck with the appearance of his retainers, who, from their dress, we imagined must be of the higher class of the Lepcha race.

Their countenances were extremely pleasing, and, coupled with a very manly bearing, they possessed great gentleness and sweetness of manner.

A few more steps and we see in front of us a ruined fort, and find ourselves standing on a highly cultivated tract of table-land, fields of millet and other grain being neatly enclosed by little wooden palisades, giving to the whole quite a home-like appearance, and reminding one more of the peaceful ploughshare than of war.

In the middle of this cultivation the old fort is situated, as well as the Soubah's dwelling—a long low range of thatched buildings, surrounded by a balcony and court-yard, shut in by high walls. Here we are invited to enter, and are not a little surprised to find about thirty women and children assembled to receive us. All are wonderfully fair, with wax-like complexions of a peculiar yellow tinge, and with a well-defined crimson spot on their cheeks, which is produced by a pigment made from a plant one frequently sees in the jungle, and which gives the appearance of rouge clumsily put on.

Like the rest, they also appear to be got up for the occasion as far as cleanliness is concerned, for their dress, though very simple in pattern and limited in quantity, consisting merely of the linen *saree*, is scrupulously clean. In this respect they form an appalling contrast to the Soubah, who would seem to regard a lack of personal cleanliness as his special privilege, and as some high prerogative denied to the weaker sex.

After some little conversation, carried on through the medium of Narboo, exchange of civilities seemed to have come to an end; when, following the Soubah, F—— and C—— went to inspect the fort, which has its bastions, but is anything but an imposing or warlike structure. I meanwhile remained behind with the women-folk, and endeavoured to prolong the colloquy through the same medium of communication, asking them how they managed to spend their time, &c.; at which they pointed to their *sarees*, which they said they wove themselves, and thence to a distant field, where I imagine flax was growing. Presently I observed three women approaching whom I had not seen before, one of whom carried a soda-water bottle containing some spirituous compound, which I was invited to drink. From this grievous infliction, however, I happily excused myself by saying I had already had as much *murwa* at the entrance to their domain as my head would stand. The soda-water bottle was apparently regarded as a precious and very *recherché* possession, probably purchased in the Darjeeling Bazaar, and used out of compliment to my nationality, wood being the only material of which their household vessels are made. One of the women, with evident pride, bade Narboo tell me, as a piece of information, that it was an English bottle, and that it had once contained *bilatee pawnee* (English water), it being a common notion all over India amongst the natives that the liquid these bottles contain is that of our English rivers and lakes

which they no doubt imagine to exist in a perpetual state of fiz.

Here I must mention, in explanation of the extraordinary delay in the arrival of food, and our consequent distress, for which at the time we were inclined to blame the Soubah, that he assured us he despatched our messengers with the necessary supplies of food without a day's delay, but that, their own hunger appeased, and forgetful of the urgent needs of their fellows, they must have lingered by the way, gossiping with the villagers; an apathy and want of consideration for the well-being of others which, I am sorry to say, is very characteristic of all these hill tribes.

THE SOUBAH'S SMALL FAMILY.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WE ENCAMP ON THE BANKS OF THE KULLAIT.

Our Soubah does not bid us adieu here, but accompanies us a short distance beyond his domain, as by this time we have learnt that Lepcha etiquette constrains him to do; and then returns, no doubt to chronicle our arrival and departure in the archives of Sikkim. All labour seems to be suspended, this being apparently regarded as a general holiday. Each peasant we meet is dressed in red-letter-day attire; whilst the women, according to their wont, endeavour to conceal themselves in bush or brake, or between the green recesses of Indian corn, whence they timidly watch us pass.

After wending our way through fields of grain which enclosed us completely on either side, we reached a little spot which had evidently been cleared recently. In the centre stood a group of well-dressed Lepchas, who approaching begged that we would here encamp. It looked so snug and thoroughly clean, that it seemed ungracious to refuse, the more so as the space must have been cleared at some personal sacrifice, the ripening corn having been

cut down for the purpose; but we had scarcely yet accomplished half a day's march, and must fain push on.

In anticipation of our arrival, paths have been made everywhere; and, entering a magnificent forest, we find ourselves on the summit of a mountain which bounds the Kullait, and look down upon the foaming river through stately trees, from which air-roots, hanging forty or fifty feet in length, sway to and fro in the breeze. Beyond these rise mountain-tops blue as heaven, like mighty sentinels shutting in the vale.

The descent to the river is almost perpendicular, but a narrow zig-zag pathway having been cut, we are enabled to reach its banks in safety. The baggage coolies are in the most alarming state of spirits, and very boisterous besides—the result of the *nuzzur* they no doubt obtained on passing through each village to-day. It is wonderful to see how they scramble down, regardless of the path, simply catching hold of the branches or air-roots, and springing from one to the other like monkeys, yet never meeting with accidents.

Following the river, and coming to a piece of level ground suitable for encampment, C—— calls a halt; and we once more come to anchor in one of the gorgeous, narrow, and V-shaped valleys of the Himalaya, all of which possess, not only in the character of their vegetation, but in general features, such distinct marks of difference that each has a beauty all its own, and there is no sameness in any.

The gorge here forms a *cul de sac*, at the end of which the Kullait falls about 300 feet over huge blocks of gneiss, and then flows on again, a broad river, with tremendous speed and ceaseless roar, walled in by precipitous forests of 8000 feet. We are now in the region of flowers, too, which adorn many of the bushes near us, as well as the noble forest trees which feather down to the water's brink. It is sweet, indeed, after all we have suffered, to bask in these asphodel pastures, and quaff nectar from Nature's own goblet, as we drink in all the luscious beauty around, gathering flowers without moving, and reducing laziness to a science—feeling for once that we can indulge in indolence without self-reproach, for there is nothing to be done but to rest, and make ourselves perfectly happy. Meanwhile F—— sits beside me in that heaven known only to smokers, which makes them throw their heads back, and drink in existence with each puff of their cigar, as though it contained for them a foram of Elysium of which the rest of the world are wholly unconscious.

THE DESOLATE REGIONS OF KOHALLEELAH

But we are not long left to our meditations, for the peasantry, having followed us, bring offerings of milk and honey, as well as millet and other things for sale. One of these, a man of about eight-and-twenty years, possessed such great beauty of feature and expression that I longed to be able to send him to my own land as a model for a painter. F—— called my attention to him first, making him stand in a position where I could best see him; and truly his was no ordinary type of beauty. He had large earnest eyes, and a far-off look, as though the mystery of existence were too mighty for his comprehension; and there were sad lines in his face besides, as though he had an ideal he could not grasp, and deep thoughts within him that he felt unable to express. He was evidently one of those inconsistencies of nature one sometimes meets with—an exotic in an unkindly soil, and in a region where it cannot thrive—and we felt instinctively that he was far above his fellows.

In common with the Lepchas of Darjeeling, all those we meet with here wear the striped scarf, or toga, than which nothing can be more classical or full of grace. They also part the hair down the centre of the head, either plaiting it neatly in a *queue*, which reaches considerably below the waist, or allowing it to fall in natural curls. They have neither beard nor whiskers, both being carefully eradicated.

The women of this district, however, in their unpicturesque *attire*, form a great contrast to their sisters of

the higher elevations; and Panchyng, in her pretty bright-coloured dress, appears to be a source of admiration, not only in the eyes of her own, but in those of the opposite sex likewise. In these warm localities she is fast getting the better of her fever, as is also her brother, it being the excessive cold which developes it, nine times out of ten, in the case of these mountaineers.

Little Goboon now presents himself with his best face on, having washed it especially for the occasion, out of consideration to my peculiar prejudices; and, blushing like a girl, hands me a plate of yams, or *kookh* as they call them, which he had dug up on his way hither, and which I promise him I will have cooked for dinner. The Shikaree also comes laden with game, and we seem all at once to have reached the land of Goshen. Walking along in the direction of our camp, we observe a singular old man, who, with his long robe, staff, and hoary beard, might have come straight out of a hermit's cell. He was a *bajoora*, they said, or Lepcha priest, who had I fancy followed them from Kabjee—a people supposed to have the power of exorcising evil spirits, and who are called in to officiate at the religious ceremonies attending marriages, births, and deaths. *A propos* of the latter, I once had an opportunity of witnessing one of the singular customs of these hill tribes.

The daughter of one of our servants—a Lepcha or Limboo, I forget which—was dying, and he asked me to go and see her. A *bajoora* had already been sent for, and

arriving at the hut, I found him standing by her side with his praying cylinder, which he twirled with one hand, whilst he waved the other over her, muttering some form of incantation the while. Then seating himself on the floor, he commenced chanting in a dismal tone, occasionally having recourse to cymbals which he had brought with him, and which he clashed as loudly as he could.

But the evil spirit, notwithstanding all these combined efforts, obstinately refusing to come out of her, and her pulse on the contrary gradually becoming more and more flickering, he came at last to the conclusion that it was a case beyond his skill, and proceeded forthwith to perform the last offices. Making a fire close to the entrance to the hut, he held a shallow iron vessel over it, in which a quantity of *ghee* had been placed, and as the smoke, like unsavoury incense, arose from the boiling mass, he prayed that her death might be speedy and painless: the whole presenting to my mind such a pathetic jumble that death itself seemed half robbed of its solemnity. Soon after I left the poor girl she breathed her last; and then a gun was fired, for the double purpose of announcing to the gods the departure of another soul, and to speed it on its way.

Lepchas, although reputed Buddhists, attribute, in common with the Limboos, every kind of disease to the agency of evil spirits, and, as far as I can ascertain, appear to combine a great deal of Hindooism with their creed.

Our tents being now pitched, F—— opens mysterious and long-forgotten boxes, and overhauls his birds and insects, which have been sadly neglected of late; whilst I get out my needle and thread, and set to work prosaically, to mend the holes in the canvas, made on the mountains by our men in their endeavours to beat off the frost which accumulated each night, and which added so greatly to its weight in carrying. At the same time C—— takes out his gun, examining it lovingly and tenderly as men do, and cleans it. In short, all suddenly awaken—now that our troubles are over—as to a new life, feeling once more that the trifles of existence are worth attending to, and concern us still.

Then the gentle Lepchas, having eaten their evening meal, come down to the river's brink, and reverently sprinkle water over themselves, as I once saw them do at the Rungheet, either to invoke the protection of the river-god, or to propitiate that watery deity. Sitting on its margin in the golden light, I find myself getting into a train of thought on the universal tendency there is in every human heart, even amongst races the most savage and primitive, to a worship of some sort—worship of the supernatural—a worship of something higher than itself; and happier far and better is even he that ignorantly worships wood and stone than the 'fool,' as David calls him, 'who says there is no God.'

As the sun sets behind the mountains that enclose the gorge, a chill creeps over us; and gathering round the

camp fire, we sit in the falling twilight, scarcely breaking silence, our feelings harmonising with the stillness of the hour. No sound is heard, for the men of our camp, worn out by their own uproariousness, are fast asleep; and solitude finds expression solely in the chirp of the grasshopper, and the peaceful roar of the river. Then darkness at length takes form: shadows, vague, weird, and mysterious, seem to come out of it together with the stars, and the 'Milky Way' shines brightly in the purple dome, believed by some of the ancients to be the pathway trodden by the spirits of the blest, on their way to Paradise. Within this circle of silence we feel part of very Nature herself; our lives, and the things that we know must come, seeming only half true, and the past all a dream.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE KAJEE OF YANTING.

THE dew was on the grass, and the mist still hovering beneath the summit of the mountain, when we struck tents the following morning, wishing if possible to reach Pemionchi before the setting of another sun.

Just as we were starting, Catoo came to announce that the kitmutgar was ill, as well as many others; all of whom are no doubt suffering from repletion, having eaten too much after their long season of fast, as well as from having partaken far more freely of '*nuzzur*' than was good for them. Several men, looking exceedingly miserable, draw up in a line before C——, begging for quinine—a thing, however, he refuses to give them on this occasion, knowing it would do them harm. Quinine is such a wonderful remedy in cases of fever, that the natives regard it as a panacea, not only for that malady, but for every other ill to which flesh is heir.

The ascent of the gorge is not less steep on this side than that by which we descended to the river yesterday, and occupies three hours. Then leaving the forest behind, we travel along the declivity of a barren moun-

tain for some considerable time; and at length recognising in the distance an indication of a stream—which may always be traced by a fringe of deeper and more vivid green following its windings—we make for the spot, and throwing ourselves down by its side, await the cooking of our breakfast, whilst listening to the music of the streamlet, for, trickling over its pebbly bed, it produced a melody like that of far-off bells.

Starting on our way again at noon, we traversed a broad pathway for some miles, and were presently met by six Sepoys of the Kajee of Yanting's guard—that old ruffian, who not only failed to send us food, exposing us to the danger of perishing in the mountains—which was no doubt precisely what he intended we should do—but who succeeded some years ago in driving the English troops out of a place called Rinchingpoong, which they were inimically holding as an aggression on Sikkim.

These Sepoys were tall and exceedingly handsome fellows, beautifully clean, both in person and dress, with a pleasing but rather effeminate exprtession of countenance, their appearance the reverse of warlike, as I hinted to Tendook; whereupon he informed me, in an apologetic tone, that they were at present out of uniform, assuring me at the same time, with a look of great importance, that their

military equipment was something very imposing! The non-combatant dress of these men, however, was certainly by far the most picturesque I have yet seen in Sikkim. It consisted of the striped Lepcha kirtle beneath a short tunic of scarlet cloth, large full sleeves of black holland closed at the wrist, and a broad-brimmed conical hat, surrounded by a band of black velvet, which, with their long knives hanging from their girdles, gave them the appearance of bandits in a scene at the Opera.

Each man as he approached made a bow that I defy an Englishman, or Bengalee either, to come up to for real grace; and having presented us with '*nuzzur*,' they preceded us to the house of the Kajee, whom we found standing at the entrance, an immensely fat and obese specimen of humanity, the very image of an inflated Chinaman. He wore the conventional pigtail and a robe of very rich brocaded satin, apparently sky-blue once, but now, alas! wofully departed from its pristine glory; and it is only truthful to add, though I do so with extreme reluctance, that he was the most insufferably dirty individual I ever beheld, and in this respect he took pre-eminence even of our old friend the Soubah, as became the greater dignity of his position!

It is passing strange why the retainers of these Sikkim magnates should be so well kempt and scrupulously clean, and they themselves so dirty, except it be, as I have already suggested, that that quality is reserved as the prerogative of the great only in this half-barbarous country!

He and his Sepoys now lead the way to a smooth knoll above the house, where we find extensive and very startling arrangements made for our reception in the shape of three seats all in a row, formed of piles of square cushions covered with silk of richest texture, placed one upon the other,—the seat of honour, which was appropriated to C——, being a little higher than the rest, and erected in the centre. Hither the Kajee conducted him, merely *motioning* us to our seats, and afterwards threw himself down upon a little island of carpet opposite, where he sat cross-legged, the Sepoys standing behind him with folded arms.

Then once more arrived the irrepressible '*murwa*.' Really the perpetual drinking of this beverage is becoming quite a serious affair. We are obliged to accept it, however, having ascertained that to refuse would be to do violence to the rules of Sikkim etiquette; but we simply hold it untasted in our hands, looking like three Sphinxes, as we sit demurely all in a row with our 'chongas' in our hands gazing at the fat Kajee; nor could I help wondering how—the performance being ended, if ever it should end—he would manage to unfold himself, and assume a standing position again.

Although these men are great personages after

their own fashion, their abodes are most untidy and wretched, and they seem to have no idea of the common decencies of life. That of the Kajee was the most deplorable thing in the shape of habitation it was possible to conceive; and whilst sitting opposite this old aristocrat, arrayed in his gorgeous apparel, his triple chin, and body undulating and corpulent—all the very personification of indolent luxury—my ear was greeted with the unmistakable cadence of pigs, and my eyes following the direction of the sound, I observed a numerous establishment of these interesting animals—certainly, I should say, belonging not to one, but to many families—dodging in and out, and burrowing under the very balcony of the mansion.

Whilst C—— and the Kajee were conversing on diplomatic affairs, the peasantry approached silently, and standing behind the Sepoys formed a motley crowd; the women wearing *sarees* of which the prevailing colours were red and yellow.

It is not easy to realise that this same Kajee, now so sleek and smiling, was the very man who, as I hinted elsewhere, not only made a prisoner of Dr. Campbell, then Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of British Sikkim, but almost starved him and his party. This gentleman was simply travelling in the 'Interior' as we are doing, accompanied by Dr. Hooker, the great botanist, whose chief object was herborisation, and for which purpose the Governor-General of India had made a

special request to the Rajah, to afford him every facility whilst travelling in his territory. Not only was this request not complied with, but every obstacle was placed in his way. At length they were attacked by fifty or sixty soldiers headed by this man—then Soubah of Singtam—who knocked Dr. Campbell down, bound him hand and foot, tightened the cords by means of a bamboo wrench to torture him, held a poisoned arrow to his ear, threatening to draw the bow if he moved but one inch, jumped upon his ribs, bent his neck down over his chest with intent to break it, and finally sat upon him. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Kajee had not then attained the magnificent proportions he at present possesses; nor could he, for, as everybody knows, Dr. Campbell lived to tell the tale.

Singular to relate, Narboo, our interpreter, then a comparatively young man, accompanied them also on their expedition and was imprisoned likewise; his captivity only lasting a fortnight, when he was released; the Kajee at the same time magnanimously offering freedom to Dr. Hooker, remarking, 'You are only a poor harmless leaf-collector—you may go.' Of this offer I need scarcely say Dr. Hooker did not avail himself, being unwilling to leave his friend alone in the hands of an uncivilised ruffian.

At this juncture the peaceful Lamas came down from the monastery to reason with the Kajee.

'What good will it do you,' said they, 'to keep two Englishmen in prison? Already an army under the

command of British Princes has arrived at the foot of the hills to obtain their release, and so vast is it that, like locusts, they have destroyed the whole country, and there is not a leaf on the trees left.'

Thus intimidated—for the Lamas' words are generally believed to be prophetic—the Kajee had already decided to act upon their advice, when news reached him that soldiers were actually marching from Darjeeling for the purpose; and although, for our disappointment in not finding the food which he promised awaiting us, he endeavoured to excuse himself by saying that the heavy fall of snow had prevented the men he had despatched with it from reaching the appointed places, yet we know full well that no snow had fallen on Mount Singalelah, to which place it was to have been in the first instance sent; and the inference may easily be drawn: but it is well to bear in mind that we are in an alien country, and the old adage, 'least said soonest mended,' is a wise precaution.

Resuming our journey, we now ascend a winding path behind the Kajee's house, which ushers us after an hour's climb into the sacred forest of Pemionchi, consisting principally of magnolia, walnut, oak, and maple, the mossy banks on each side of our pathway being studded with the wild strawberry and wood violet. After a pleasant march of three hours, we reach an opening in the forest and see several monks running to meet us with unaffected signs of welcome. Hereupon we exchanged salaams, gesticulated, exchanged salaams again, and once

more gesticulated eloquently; and then finding there was nothing more to do, and that we were unable to pursue civilities further, we one and all laughed heartily. Our greeting with these monks, therefore, was at any rate cheery, if not quite intelligible; and they looked so thoroughly jovial that we found it impossible, even in their severe monastic dress, to gaze at them without smiling.

Our encampment was situated on an artificially raised mound flattened on the top, on which were two ancient ruins, resembling altars, very suggestive of human sacrifices in years gone by. The tents had all been pitched, and large fires lighted in readiness for us, which were very welcome, for we are now at an elevation of seven thousand feet, and the climate, after the almost tropical valleys we have passed through, seemed piercingly cold. Here we found all our people whom we sent on from Mount Singaleelah, and they were not only well, but testifying by their looks the good cheer they had experienced at the hands of the monks since their arrival.

Then came more monks bringing presents of fowls, eggs, milk, and 'murwa,' till we were soon surrounded by a crowd of them, all seeming very desirous of entering into conversation, which, in Narboo's absence, however, was found to be an impossibility. These Lamas are very fine specimens of the Mongolian race, being altogether exceedingly intelligent-looking fellows. Their heads are closely shaven and their feet unshod, their

dress a long loose garment of coarse garnet-coloured serge, tied round the waist with a girdle; whilst the neck and chest being left bare and displaying a rosary, they appear, thus equipped, very orthodox monks.

Just below our tent is a large 'mendong,' surmounted by a cupola of very beautiful design, the outer walls of which are covered with inscriptions carved on chlorite slate. The Goompa or monastery itself stands on a hill a quarter of a mile distant, and as far as we can yet see is a quaint mass of masonry, the walls of which slope outwards from the vertical.

We had just dined, and I was lying down within my tent, weary of the day's ceremonies—for we seemed suddenly to have arrived at the big world again—when we were greeted by the most awful and unearthly noises it is possible to imagine. That it proceeded from the Goompa, and was produced by some enormous instrument, I could not doubt; and if one could liken it to anything terrestrial, it might be said to resemble the trumpeting of an elephant, combined with the groans of a camel in extreme pain. Now the sound almost died away, now again it burst forth in renewed agony, till the very air vibrated. Continuing thus for the space of half an hour, it suddenly descended into unutterable bass, where it got quite beside itself, and floundered about madly. Some other instruments, very like hurdy-gurdies, now joined in, and carried on the strains in the treble, as if giants were disporting themselves on proportionately

large instruments, the camel meanwhile sustaining its groans in the bass, working itself each moment into a greater pitch of frenzy, till the sun disappeared behind the mountains, when all sound gradually subsided, and the votaries of Budh, who until that instant had been standing about us, idly gossiping with each of our men in turn, obeyed this uninviting summons to vespers, and left us with all speed.

Wondering very much about the monks and their strange religion, as we sat upon the slabs of the ruined mendong, on the lowest step of which our fire was burning, we wandered back in thought to the Druids, of whom these quaint people forcibly reminded us, when the priests of the Celtic nations worshipped in groves and had their human sacrifices: not that the Buddhists are like them in this respect, but they have their sacred groves as we have seen, the Goompa standing in the very midst of one. Like the Druids they also have their priestesses, and believe not only in metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, but in the immortality of the soul likewise. The singular flat piece of masonry upon which the mystic words, Om—Mani—Padmi—Om, are carved in bas-relief had probably once been an altar. These words are in the Thibetan alphabet, but the language itself is so exceedingly old that no one knows their precise meaning. All, however, agree that it is some form of invocation to the Deity. Some averring that it means 'Oh, receive me into thine essence!' others, 'To Him!' or, 'Hail to

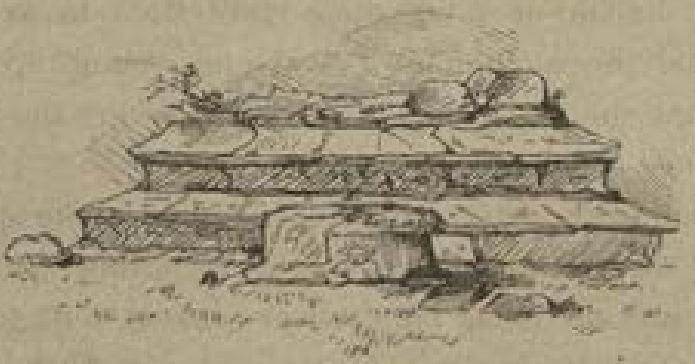
Him of the Lotus and the Jewel!' whilst others, again, declare that the first and last word, 'Om,' means sacrifice.

On reaching this place we found a 'chowkeydar,' who had arrived from Darjeeling with letters and despatches for C——. Amongst them were two letters for ourselves, dated a fortnight ago; one of them enclosing a quaint little epistle from Lattoo, who, unable to write a letter herself, had, as she expressed it, 'told her words to a "letter-writer" at the bazaar.' She had been 'very much sick,' she said, since I left. 'Sometime plenty cold, sometime too much warm; plenty tired now, bones growing big, no more hunger but plenty pain; no spin, no drive buffalo up where mem sahib used to write the trees and the mountains.' And she wound up all by telling me she was going to 'the land where the flowers never die.'

Thus ran the letter with the exception of the spelling, and her saying that her 'bones were getting big,' which was her way of telling me she was growing thin, touched me more than aught else. Lattoo's sole idea of the Christian's heaven had always been that of a sort of green paradise; her notion of 'fadeless flowers' having been gathered from the hymns she had been taught by the missionary's wife, with whom she lived when a child.

The moment I read her letter I sat down to reply to it in language as simple as possible. I told her she must not take such a desponding view of her illness; she was not yet to go to the land 'where the flowers never fade,'

but get well if it pleased God, and live to gather many in the valley of the sweet Rungnoo, and bring them to me as she did last year, and be herself my Alpine flower once more. I should soon be safely home again I hoped, when I would send for an English doctor to see her at my house, and then after a little while she would be as strong as ever. But I retired to rest, feeling very sad notwithstanding, and wishing after all that I had brought her with me.



CHAPTER L.

THE MONKS OF PEMIONCHI.

About three o'clock on the following morning, just as we were in the very soundest sleep, we were awakened by the same wild noises, which sounded if possible even more unearthly in the darkness than they had done the previous evening. As soon as the sun had risen I dressed, and taking my sketching apparatus with me, started for the Goompa, whence I had been told a beautiful and near view of the snows could be obtained.

F—— was too tired after his long walk yesterday to accompany me, but Panchyng, Narboo, and the usual bodyguard of Chuprassees did so. From the eminence upon which our tents were situated I looked down upon the camp. Fires were being lighted in all directions, the smoke of which mingled with the mist that still hung in the hollows, whilst the hills stood out blue and cold against the glowing sky. Several monks had already descended and were engaged in earnest conversation with some of our people. Ascending the very steep path which led to the Goompa, we passed menials, in monastic attire, carrying up water in long 'chongas.' Many of these had goitre—one was deaf and dumb; another frightfully

deformed: each had, in short, some malady, to render him an object of charity to the benevolent monks.

The summit gained, a lovely, though by no means extensive, panorama presented itself to our view. The highest peaks, however, were visible, appearing within a stone's throw. Nursyng, which greatly increases in importance from this spot, standing out proudly in her dazzling mantle of newly fallen snow.

Beneath, to the left, lay the valley of the Kullait, to the right that of the Ratong. Ascending a few steps further, I found myself in a large open square, in the centre of which stands the Goompa, a lofty and very solid-

looking building. From the windows, which were few, high up, irregularly placed, and of a very singular shape, the shaven heads of the Lamas could occasionally be seen, looking down upon us, as they told their beads; whilst others flitted to and fro in the courtyard on their respec-

tive duties, taking little heed of me, except in furtive glances.

At length, opening my easel, I attempted a sketch, and then their curiosity knew no bounds. They had obviously never seen the like before, and, completely puzzled, they gathered round me, eager to ascertain the nature of my strange occupation. On looking over my shoulder, I also saw two of the Kajee's Sepoys, who, having approached silently, were watching my proceedings with grave interest.

Presently two Lamas made their appearance, wearing high conical caps with long flaps covering the ears—the kind of thing worn by Ghebers, or Fire-worshippers of old—and taking up a position on little square blocks of masonry, situated on either side the Goompa, they began blowing through immense conch shells as hard as they were able, and from the sweet strains that followed I instantly recognised the hurdy-gurdies of the previous evening.

As soon as the sound had ceased, all the monks began scuttling away, the Kajee's soldiers alone remaining behind. Then, proceeding from an upper chamber, I heard the low muttering of many voices as if in prayer. En-

quiring of Narboo whether I could see them at their devotions, and being answered in the affirmative, I followed him up a narrow staircase *outside* the Goompa, hewn roughly out of a solid piece of wood,—the Sepoys, who had not once left me, and who seemed to be dogging my footsteps, following also.

Pushing open a massive door, whose lintels sloped outwards from the vertical, like the walls of the Goompa,

Narboo ushered me into a large apartment, where a number of Lamas, seated on the ground, were reading from a pile of manuscripts each had before him on a little wooden desk. These manuscripts, which were written, I observed, on one side only, consisted of separate oblong squares of paper made from the *Daphne papyrifera* having all the appearance of parchment. When one had been read, it was quickly laid aside, and another taken up, without causing any break in their reading; and thus

passing leaf after leaf in rapid succession, they did not stir till the whole, about fifty, had been gone through.

So completely absorbed were they in their devotions, or *appeared* so to be, that my entrance was scarcely observed, none of them looking up, or manifesting signs of the slightest consciousness of my intrusion. Opposite, but not reading, sat an obese old monk, whose duty it seemed rather to keep an eye over the rest than to perform his own devotions, as he slid bead after bead through his fat fingers.

During the process, a Lama entered from an adjoining apartment dressed in a coarser garment—a menial of the establishment I imagine—carrying a large quaint vessel, resembling a dropsical teapot, with a goitery neck, like most of the peasantry. Hereupon each Lama, still continuing his prayers, took from his bosom a small wooden bowl, made from the knotted root of the maple-tree, into which some of the liquid was poured. I ascertained from Panchyng that this liquid was a mixture called 'chee,' consisting of tea, cut from the tea-bricks made in Thibet, salt, butter, and beans, all of which are first boiled and then churned together, being nothing more nor less than the tea-soup to which I have before alluded. Having tasted it, however, I cannot recommend it as an addition to the European *cuisine*.

After the monks had partaken of this singular compound, which they did still muttering their prayers, they literally licked the platter clean, looking again and again to

see if aught remained clinging to its sides; then, rolling the tongue completely round it, they once more returned it affectionately to their bosoms.

The number of monks present was about eighty. Some few of the younger members of the confraternity looked painfully ascetic. The elders, however, having apparently got well over the period of asceticism, had settled down into a very comfortable and jolly frame of mind; and, judging from their appearance, I should say they lived on something far more fattening than 'chee.'

These monks, like their European brethren, are in a sense the confessors of the people, taking vows not only of sanctity but celibacy also, although the latter is not insisted on. They are also said to subject themselves occasionally to the most severe forms of abstinence, whilst some of their co-religionists have sealed their belief in metempsychosis by a voluntary death, the road to the highest perfection, according to their creed, being the sacrifice of the individual self.

At the end of the room stood an altar upon which several small images were resting, and on either side of it were numerous shelves containing manuscripts all neatly arranged and tied up in separate packets or volumes.

Like the higher powers corporeal, these spiritual potentates and holy friars seem to regard a lack of cleanliness as an essential part of their very being, and the aphorism 'cleanliness is next to godliness' has

evidently never been translated into the Thibetan language. They were still engaged in their devotions when I left them, and my departure seemed as little heeded as my arrival.

On descending to the courtyard, followed by Narboo and the Sepoys, I found F——, who, not having guessed I was in the Goompa, was wondering what in the world

had become of me. Having heard that at eleven o'clock there was to be a service in the temple, at which we might be present if we wished, we remained loitering about in the vicinity of the Goompa; and long before that time, the monks, having completed their preliminary devotions, came down, and gathering about our people, conversed pleasantly with them. Many of the peasantry, also, had by this time collected together to see us, and

as they recognised old acquaintances amongst the members of our camp, an exchange of salutations took place, the form being to push out the tongue, genuflect, and scratch the ear—a ceremony we frequently saw performed during our stay in this singular country.

CHAPTER LI.

SERVICE AT THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE.

A GONG sounded the hour of worship, and on our expressing a wish to look at the temple before the service began, a Lama stepped forward and at once led the way. It is entered by three large doorways, which are screened from the light of day by heavy curtains. On first entering the temple, the light was so exceedingly 'dim and religious' that we could hardly grope our way along; but as the eye gradually became accustomed to the darkness, objects began to take shape, and then we found ourselves in a spacious building very Egyptian in style, the pillars being square, and larger at the base than at the top; the walls, as well as the architraves of the doors, sloping outwards from the vertical, the ceiling being consequently much smaller than the *floor* of the structure,—a circumstance, by the way, that lends to the exterior of the building a wonderful appearance of solidity and strength.

Two long rows of pillars separated the nave, which we ascertained was the portion of the temple in which worship is performed, from the outer aisles; whilst upon the altar, which is in the *west*, rested a huge gilt figure of Budh, the founder of their religion, who flourished

about six hundred years before the Christian era, and two hundred years before India was invaded by Alexander. This individual is always represented sitting cross-legged, the popular belief amongst his followers being that his life was one perpetual act of meditation; but if so, he must in the course of his musings have come across some very astounding theory, for he is here depicted with such a stare on his countenance that it is impossible not to believe that something must have highly astonished him. On either side of this central figure of Budh were others of less pretension, but maintaining also a sitting posture, and all alike engaged in contemplation.

This monastery, founded four or five hundred years ago, was accidentally destroyed by fire in 1860, when the greater part of its valuable library, consisting of four hundred volumes of manuscripts of the Buddhist Scriptures, written in Thibetan, was burnt also. The present edifice, the interior of which differs, I am told, in many respects from the former one, is the entire work of the Lamas themselves, who obtained the materials for its embellishment chiefly from Thibet, where the head of their Priesthood, the Grand Lama, resides. The decoration of the walls of the temple is still incomplete; but the roof and the capitals of the pillars are richly painted in gold and various colours, arranged with marvellous correctness, no two colours being in juxtaposition that are not the complementary of each other. Thus, red

may almost invariably be seen contiguous to green, blue to orange, and citron to violet. It would of course be absurd to suppose that these semi-barbarians understand the science of chromatics, or the laws that govern harmony and contrast; and one is forced to the conclusion therefore that they must have been guided solely by that which pleased the eye. At any rate the effect was perfect, and nothing throughout the building struck discordant colour-notes.

Their devices, however, are the wildest conceptions possible: winged dragons, tongues of fire, and a species of nondescript animal with a human face, which one could easily fancy, for want of a better simile, must be intended to represent deified Lamas without any bodies —Buddhist cherubim possibly. Besides these there are the Lotus, and a wheel with three rays, called a 'chuck-ree,' a singular hieroglyph typical of the Buddhist Trinity, which all taken together might be the twelve signs of the Zodiac gone mad. To attempt to analyse them would have driven one to the borders of insanity, the whole looking like nothing so much as a photograph — were such possible—of the cerebrum of some highly delirious person suffering from 'fireworks on the brain.'

The truth is that we are dealing here with art which at best must be called semi-barbarous. There are shrines of Budh where the image of the wise man (for such is the meaning of the word) is said to impress even the European visitor with the sense of that impassive and

eternal calm to which the saint at length attained in his supreme beatitude. Possibly the image of Budh at Pemionchi may convey this feeling to the devout monks who daily worship before it; but on us it left only the impression of a vacant stare. And is it altogether unreasonable to assume that we here meet with the externals of Buddhism more as they originally were, than in countries where they may have become gradually modified by the surroundings of rapidly increasing civilisation?

All this time not only were the Sepoys following us, but Budh's eyes also, giving one the impression of a person who could not move his head by reason of a stiff neck, but who was nevertheless determined not to lose sight of us for a single instant; and it was quite impossible not to feel, as his big eyes were fixed upon us with the peculiar expression I have described, that he was indulging in by no means flattering astonishment at our appearance.

Whilst taking all this in at a glance, the monks noiselessly entered one by one, each as he did so facing the image of Budh, and prostrating himself before it till his forehead touched the earth, a genuflection thrice repeated with an appearance of the deepest reverence and devotion; after which they took their seats on the low cushions which extended the whole way up the nave, on either side within the pillars.

Then entered the High Priests, or chief Lamas, both very fat, their dress much more severe in shape, and limited in quantity, one arm and shoulder being left bare.

But this deficiency in the matter of clothing was fully compensated for, I am sorry to say, by the extra garment of the common element they wore, as became their more advanced stage of sanctity. In this respect I should say they had reached the topmost rung of the ladder, and were quite ready to be deified, like the figures on the altar. Their heads were adorned with high stiff cloth caps, probably scarlet once, but now a deep rich mellow brown, in shape a caricature of a bishop's mitre.

On each side of the altar stood a rudely carved chair, hewn, as was everything else, out of a solid block of wood, which one instinctively felt must have belonged to the founder of their religion, if not to some even more ancient divine. These chairs were appropriated to the use of the chief Lamas, and as soon as they had taken their seats the service began.

Strange as were the surroundings of these Pagans, and grim as were their symbols, how can I find language to express the majesty and grandeur of their worship, which impressed me more deeply than anything I have ever seen or heard, and in which I realised faintly a sort of abstract idea of what the worship of the All-Supreme by poor feeble human lips should be? It filled me with wonder and admiration; and the chanting of their Service is a thing never to be forgotten while memory lasts.

The whole, which was a kind of Litany, was sung in the very deepest monotone, and preserved with marvellous precision; the voices musical, and harmonising

perfectly. Every now and then they ceased chanting for an instant, after which the chief Lamas beginning some fresh theme in a higher key which sounded like a wild burst of rhapsody, they all took up the strain, and sank once more to the same deep note. Although this solemn Litany was in a language with which we were wholly unfamiliar, it scarcely seemed to be in an unknown tongue, for there was a descriptiveness in the rendering of the whole which in a great measure enabled us to follow its meaning. Now, their voices blending in deep and solemn utterance, they seemed to be mourning their sins and shortcomings in profoundest humiliation and self-abasement; now, bursting forth in joyous cadence, they seem at last—having withstood the temptations to which they had been exposed in successive stages of existence—to see before them the prospect of Nirvana, and they reach some other and higher development in which all is adoring rapture, as they imagine themselves absorbed into the very essence of the Deity. There was also an earnestness and simplicity about their worship that left no room for doubt as to its sincerity. Amongst the number, I observed one very old monk who was suffering from *lachrymal fistula*, his dear old eyes shedding countless involuntary tears, sufficient to wash away the sins of all his brethren, as well as his own too, if they could only have been vicarious.

In the midst of the Service, incongruous as it may seem, two men silently entered with 'chee.' Out came

again the little bowls, the contents of which they did not drink. As they held these, still reciting, the chant grew softer and softer, till the faintest sound was scarcely audible, and we could hardly tell when the last word died away—a vocal feat that could only have been acquired by long and careful practice. As one listened to them, and gazed at their surroundings, one felt somehow as though time itself were either altogether annihilated, or had passed them by with folded wing; for there appears to be no link whatever to connect these singular people even with mediæval times, and we were probably witnessing a scene similar to that upon which Alexander himself may have gazed. In fact, as far as their appearance went, they might have pulled up short somewhere about the reign of Cheops, if not in the depths of a still more remote antiquity, and have never moved since.

At length all drank the contents of their bowls in silence, which seemed part of the ceremony. Then another monk bringing water, which had been blessed, in a highly chased silver flagon, poured some over the hands of each; and the Service coming thus to an end, they all withdrew as silently as they had entered, with the excep-

tion of the two chief Lamas. These, retaining their seats on each side of the altar, began making tender enquiries after our health, one of them expressing astonishment that a lady could travel by such paths, and in such inclement regions.

It seemed odd to be questioned, and as it were gossiped with, in a temple devoted to the worship of the All-Supreme; but our conversation was happily cut short by C——'s entrance, who had abstained from being present at their Service on religious grounds, but who wished to see the temple itself. We ask permission therefore to make a more careful inspection of the altar; a permission readily granted, with the proviso, however, that we did not stand *opposite* to it.

Besides the large centre figure of Budh were others, representing Lamas who, having lived in this or some previous existence, had obtained deification.

Below these figures—which were on a super altar—numerous quaint vessels were standing, containing oil, water, and rice. A light was also burning, which is never suffered to go out, whilst the smoke of incense poured through the perforated cover of an urn, richly chased with silver dragons, which of all others would seem to be their favourite device. Amongst other things, we observed a brilliantly painted cock, not at all unlike the one that comes out and crows when the clock of Strasburg Cathedral strikes twelve. We tried very hard, through Narboo, our medium of communication, to make

them explain what this symbolised, but could ascertain nothing definitely, but there can be little doubt that we have here the bird of morning which with his last words Socrates bade his friend sacrifice to the Great Healer who summons the dead from their graves. It may without much fear be said that the phonomena of dawn teach everywhere the same consoling lesson.

Whatever may be the belief of the Buddhists of Ceylon, China, and India generally—for Buddhism is so varied that it can scarcely be called one creed,—those of the Himalayan districts do certainly believe in the existence of a Universal Spirit, ever present, into which they hope one day to be absorbed. Buddha himself, the 'wise' or 'enlightened one,' being a human soul thus absorbed, is not, by these Buddhists at any rate, regarded as a separate Deity, or worshipped as such, but only as a part of the Great Whole.

So far as I can see, the religion of the Buddhist is a kind of Pantheism; and there is a great similarity between Buddhism and Brahminism: the Hindoo's idea of future blessedness being also that of absorption into the Godhead, and a belief in 'One existing in all things, and all things existing in One: God in the universe, and the universe in God.'

But to return to the 'Nirvana' of the Buddhists—which is simply the losing of their individuality, as they become incorporated into the Divine Essence. Did they believe in annihilation, as the term is generally understood

by Englishmen, it would be impossible not to look with wonder and astonishment on their lives—lives of prayer, devotion, and self-sacrifice, and to some even of severest asceticism, all endured to obtain that merely which we attribute, rightly or wrongly, to 'the brutes that perish.' On the contrary, they appear to look forward to the distant Nirvana with the most ardent longings of which the human soul is capable. It is a consummation, however, that can only be arrived at after many successive terrestrial existences, and then only by the avoidance of every vice, and the practice of every virtue, and it is so far off, and so difficult to attain, that it must at best be very cold comfort even to the 'faithful.'

Their code of morality is the highest conceivable, and their system perfect; but it is one solely of merit, and there is something ineffably sad in the almost utter hopelessness of their creed; for how few can expect to attain to the necessary degree of holiness. Gazing at these poor devoted creatures, I felt that their self-sacrifice and abnegation were worthy of a surer hope, and in their yearnings for something above and beyond themselves to rest in, which is innate in human nature wherever it is found, I realised more than ever that of every belief prevalent amongst men there is none so suited to the wants of poor humanity as that of the Christian.

But one cannot help feeling an interest, and something akin to reverence, too, for a system of religion which numbers amongst its votaries more than half the world

It is impossible for any one who has lived in the midst of these lordly mountains, and grand pathetic solitudes, and opened his heart to the deep lessons they teach, not to look far beyond the bands of sect in his relations with the Eternal: and I for one left the temple greatly impressed with the monks and their grand and ancient worship. The dimly lighted shrine, the dress of the people themselves, and their wonderfully solemn chant, were very striking; and, in spite of much that seemed barbarous in the externals of their religion, I saw no worship of idols, but merely reverence for the Founder of their creed through the image that represented him, and solemn prayer to the One Great Spirit; and in heart I worshipped with them.

It is passing strange how we 'hate each other for the love of God.' Many an earnest and well-meaning Christian Iconoclast would doubtless have witnessed their service with disgust and pious horror, for a benevolent and charitable dislike to every form of religion differing from our own is a thing too often imbibed in childhood. That spirit of loving charity, which once prompted the old Scotch minister, at the close of an extempore prayer, to say, 'And now, Lord, of thine infinite mercy, blast with eternal wrath that arch-hypocrite, the Pope,' is I fear still common even in this enlightened age: while far too rare is that of the other old Scotchman, who, unable to believe anyone beyond the reach of mercy, having supplicated heaven for every species of sinner under

the sun, exclaimed with exquisite pathos, 'And now, my friends, let us pray for the puir deil!'

To despise the religion of others, does not enhance the truth or beauty of our own. Far better is it to cull the good in all, recognising in each the struggle of man after Light, his faith in the unseen, and yearnings after a better, holier life. If we only understood them better, we should doubtless see less in them to condemn, and more that is worthy of our imitation.

Only once have I witnessed so impressive a service, and that not in England, or abroad in vast cathedrals, but amongst those lowly converts to Christianity, the Santals of Chota Nagpore, a province in Bengal, where there are already about seven thousand who have enrolled themselves under the banner of the cross, and where upwards of seven hundred sought and received baptism only last year according to the rites of the Anglican Church. In their church I saw no wandering eye. The things of earth shut out, they seemed alone with Him they came to worship, their very soul appearing to go forth in gratitude and adoring love, and their bodies vibrating with the fervour of their prayers, as, with clasped hands and upturned faces, by faith they saw Him who is 'invisible.'

To ourselves, whose ears have become familiarised to them, the Scriptures have naturally lost much of their graphic power, and it is not easy to realise the intense fervour of these new-born Christians. But there is no

question that the Gospel to them was indeed one of 'good tidings of great joy;' and when their voices, with wonderful harmony, burst forth in a gentle hymn of praise, it was one of the most affecting and touching things I ever heard.

Leaving their church, in which eleven hundred had gathered, the women, clothed in their spotlessly white 'sarees,' which covered their heads as with a veil, pressed round me, each saying 'Yesû sahâry!' (Jesus be your helper); and I felt for an instant that I had been carried back to Apostolic times, and envying their enthusiasm, wished that I too had only recently been told the 'old, old story.'

CHAPTER LII.

C——'s LITTLE DURBAR.

"Whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after Immortality?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into Nought?"

THE greater number of the monks were standing about the courtyard when we quitted the temple, some telling off more prayers on their rosaries, some gossiping with the men of our camp, whilst others looked down upon us from the windows of the Goompa; till at length one, coming up to us, asked if we would like to see the manuscripts and musical instruments.

The library, or rather that portion of it which still remains, consists of several shelves filled with piles of books, tied up in separate packets or volumes, more than two-thirds of their original number having been destroyed by the fire in 1860. A very beautiful and valuable manuscript history of Sikkim, compiled by the Lamas, and written in black and gold, on oblong squares of parchment, was also ruthlessly demolished during the Nepaul war, when the Goorkhas—the principal tribe of that

country—Hindoos in religion, actually used it for roofing in their huts. Some few of these Buddhist monasteries possess manuscripts written upwards of two thousand years ago, being translations from the Sanscrit into the Thibetan language; some of which, containing deep philosophy, resemble the Proverbs of Solomon. Not long ago, in a charming little book, entitled 'The Childhood of the World,' I read a translation of some of these proverbs, three of which I subjoin:—

'Conquer anger by mildness, evil by good, falsehood by truth.'

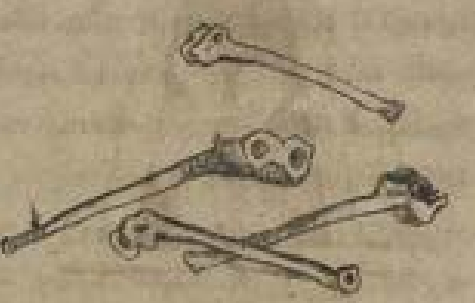
'Be not desirous of discovering the faults of others, but zealously guard against your own.'

'He is a more noble warrior who subdues himself, than he who in battle conquers thousands.'

By this time the musical (?) instruments—instruments of *torture* as F—— calls them—were brought out for exhibition; and once more leaving the interior of the Goompa, we saw two monks, each holding a bronze telescopic trumpet, the mouth of which rested on the ground, and which, when pulled out to its fullest extent, measured no less than sixteen feet!

No sooner had they blown through them than the

very earth shook beneath our feet, and we entreated them to desist, for the noise they created was quite overpowering. After this, the conch shells were produced, which take such a prominent part in the wild music of these monasteries, and which, richly mounted in silver, are wonderful specimens of the anaglyptic art. Next came bone trumpets, interesting relics of deceased Lamas, their once brethren in the flesh, for, according to their creed, no sound is half so sweet as that which proceeds from the bone of a defunct member of their fraternity. Through several of these trumpets they blew lustily, and seemed not a little amused at their own performance.



Other lively things in the shape of drums, formed of two skulls placed back to back, in which small stones had been inserted, the holes in the faces being covered with parchment. This last sweet thing in their musical *répertoire* produced when shaken a sound like that of the 'bones' in the hands of an Ethiopian serenader. The Lamas also exhibited à kind of trident, emblematic of their Trinity—Budh, Dhurma, and Sunga.

These friendly monks, desirous of making us acquainted with the whole of their dwelling, now conducted us up a very steep and dangerous staircase, to the upper storey of the monastery, and showed us into a large kitchen.

The fire was burning on a stone hearth in the centre of the room, the smoke of which found its way through a hole in the roof, chimneys being unknown in Sikkim. Round the fire a number of enormous iron and earthen pots were boiling, containing various comestibles, chiefly rice, chee, and murwa; whilst a monk, of an inferior order apparently, stood watching the process, stirring each in succession with a long wooden ladle.

Descending to the courtyard, small china cups were handed round to us, containing a liquid which looked like milk and water. It was hard lines, to say the least of it, to have to taste anything made by these hospitable but intolerably dirty Philistines, but *noblesse oblige*, and after doing violence to our feelings and tasting it, we found that it consisted of some kind of spirit excessively like bad maraschino.

Looking down from this spot, we could just see the old Court, or Durbar, of the Rajah, now uninhabited and fallen into ruin. On the spur of the opposite mountain there is also another dilapidated edifice, that of a Goompa, for women, deserted many a year ago, however, except by one old dowager priestess, who still lives there. Its contents—a large and valuable library of the Buddhist Scriptures, the images, and all the religious etceteras—were carried away by the nuns when, for some reason or other, they fled into Thibet.

The full number of Lamas at this monastery is, I believe, one hundred and eight, all of whom, supported

out of the general resources of the country, are supposed to devote themselves to perpetual contemplation, except when absent on pilgrimages, or on visitations to other monasteries, of which there are several in this locality—this, however, being the principal one, where noviciates are prepared for the priesthood. These Goompas are invariably perched upon eminences, generally on the extreme summit of the mountain, where the surroundings seem to favour contemplation. But there was doubtless a much deeper significance originally in their erection on mountains than mere seclusion and contemplation, the people believing they were thus brought into closer and more direct communication with the Deity; the high places of the earth being supposed to be those where He delivered his oracles to man. In olden time there is little doubt also but that sacrifices, if not of 'bullocks and rams,' yet of some other kind, were offered upon these ancient altars with which we are here surrounded.

Before descending to our camp, we were taken to see the praying cylinder, in a room set apart to itself, a little below the monastery. It is gaudily painted, in strips of blue, red, green, and orange, and stands from eight to ten feet high, measuring about twenty in circumference. Within this cylinder is a scroll, on which the words 'Om—Mani—Padmi—Om' are inscribed, and which is made to revolve by a superannuated Lama, whose peculiar vocation it seemed to be to conduct the

process. So very old and shrivelled was he, that, seated in a corner, he looked more like the skeleton of a monk permanently established there. He holds a rope which, pulled slightly, causes the scroll to unfold; and, as it does so, he inaudibly mutters the mystic words, and a bell rings.

Later in the day, C—— held an imposing Durbar; and we saw our fat Kajee coming panting and wheezing up the hill, followed by a number of Sepoys, the two I have spoken of never having left our sides to-day, till we were beginning to get tired of their company: for it was evident they were keeping an eye upon our movements. The chief Lama, too, presented himself almost at the same moment as the Kajee, heading a procession of monks, carrying rice, millet, oranges, butter, black salt, and a variety of other things, which they laid at C——'s feet. Behind the Lama walked a very important personage, viz. the Dewan, or Prime Minister of the Rajah; a wily fellow, in whose hands, it is said, the Rajah is a mere puppet, and who overrides the Kajees, Soubahs, and Chiefs of the whole territory, levying taxes on the poor 'grievous to be borne;' the approved method of collecting revenue in this enlightened country often consisting in bringing the defaulters to reason by a bodily suspension head downwards to the strong branch of a tree; at other times by tying them to its trunk, with their arms pinioned and mouths gagged.

The dress of this Dewan is perfectly Chinese in style,

and composed of a magnificent yellow satin robe, heavily embroidered with green and blue dragons. This, by the way, he had no right to wear, *yellow* being the symbol of royalty in this country; but I fancy he reigns supreme in Sikkim.

During the ceremony the Lama and Dewan were accommodated with chairs, in which the latter looked thoroughly uncomfortable; whilst the Kajee resumed his favourite attitude on the ground, where he sat cross-legged. But Tendook, F——, and I, as small guns, and shining only by a reflex glory, stood behind C——, listening to the proceedings with grave interest, Narboo being interpreter as usual.

The old Lama, who always seemed to sit with folded hands, and who showed far less well away from his monastic surroundings, was yet a perfect type of his order, and complained bitterly of their poverty, since the British Government annexed the low-lying lands in the Rajah's territory, from which he principally derived his revenue, the Rajah having been obliged in consequence to withdraw his subsidy of 3,000 rupees, which he had annually devoted to the monks. Their appearance, however, belied his words, for a more jovial set of *recluses* it is hardly possible to imagine.

Towards evening a number of women came to do 'pooja' to the Mem Sahib, headed by the old priestess, all anxious to see what sort of an animal a European lady could be like. She was dressed in serge, after the manner

of the monks, her neck and chest exposed, over which hung a rosary. The other women who accompanied her, and who, I imagine, were peasants from the neighbouring villages, were strikingly handsome, and all extremely fair. I was unable to speak to them in the language of the lip, but admired their costume, which was very picturesque; and appealing thus to the vanity of these daughters of Eve, who evidently had instincts in common with those of other and more civilised countries, we became quite friendly by that 'touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.' Gathering closely round me, the dowager Lama proceeded to make a very minute examination of my dress, which afforded them great amusement. They took off my hat, dived into my pocket, and finally unbuttoned my cloak, to ascertain what other mysteries remained yet unexplored. Several children were amongst the number: little bright-eyed creatures, all wonderfully clean, as were their mothers also, to whom I gave small silver coins, which I have no doubt they will first have blessed by the Lamas, to prevent their doing them harm, and then wear round their necks as ornaments; these primitive people having no

The dowager Lama

use for money, all their commercial transactions being carried on by barter.

The old woman, on seeing F—— and Tendook approach, remarked to the former that I looked very *good*, and she hoped that he did not beat me much; upon which F—— replied, that although it was the custom in India for men to beat their wives, in England it was all the other way! This statement, translated into their language by Tendook, was received by my feminine audience with a chorus of very feeling applause; and I think they would not unwillingly have migrated with their lords to that delightful country, to have an opportunity of a little revenge.

Finding that the 'pooja' was likely to continue till put an end to by myself, I pleaded fatigue, and took refuge within my tent; whilst F—— went off to the forest with his gun, having seen some remarkably pretty birds with black and yellow plumage, and little tufts on their heads like chignons. The humane Lamas, however, on hearing the report of his fowling-piece, soon followed, entreating him to desist, saying they regarded it as a cruel sport, and that they never allowed an arrow to be shot in the forest by any of their own people.

The fear of man never having been handed down to them by their ancestors, the birds are wonderfully tame here, approaching us as though we were things inanimate, and hopping round and about us quite familiarly. They are, however, not so impudent in their

familiarity as the birds that infest the Cities of the Plains, where I have watched them come, day after day, to pluck the wool out of our Mirzapore carpets, to make linings for their nests, and where the crows, congregating by scores, perch like sparrows on the house-top, waiting to descend the very moment there is a chance of entering it unawares, and carrying off some booty. These crows are a cunning folk, experience teaching me to believe them capable of almost anything. In India it is very amusing to watch them at all times, and see how they watch *you*, scanning you with the keen, searching, and discriminating eye of a physiognomist, acquainting themselves with all your habits, and almost understanding what you say. How often have I watched their movements at mid-day repasts, through the open doorway, and seen them come hopping across the verandah! They never look you straight in the face, but hop sideways, with their heads awry, apparently intently regarding the indications of the weather; but, artful, dodgy, wise birds, they are in truth only waiting the first moment of your leaving the table to fly in and pounce upon the first savoury object they see, and be off with it in a twinkling. How well I remember being visited each morning at breakfast for many weeks by a lame crow, which came limping along sideways in the most pitiful and wobegone manner. We were not, as a rule, prone to encourage the visits of this crafty species of the feathered tribe; but in this one, as he came limping along, there was something so droll

that our interest and compassion were excited, and we regularly consoled him with a bone, or some other succulent morsel. After a while, however, he grew careless, making sure of the continuance of our bounty, and it was at length discovered that although he *came* limping, the very instant he had had his breakfast, he hopped off on both legs as nimbly as possible.

At another period of my residence in the plains, I remember being considerably puzzled by the constant departure of my soap, a tablet of that indispensable article disappearing from my room daily. I was also bewildered no less at the unaccountable splashings of water frequently seen about the walls; but one day, on hearing a great clatter, flapping, and unusual commotion, I noiselessly slipped in, and to my astonishment saw four crows, one deliberately taking his bath in the basin, whilst two others, sitting on the washing stand close by, were waiting their turn for a plunge; a fourth, with a tablet of soap in his beak, being perched on the top of my wardrobe, where I subsequently found my ayah's duster, a long-lost thimble, a watch-key, five pieces of soap, two chicken bones, and an egg-shell, all snugly placed there 'to be left till called for.'

F——, now returning from his unsuccessful stroll in quest of sport, insisted on one more climb to the Goompa. On our way we met two monks 'all shaven and shorn,' leading a fat bullock, ornamented with scarlet tassels, little bells, and a wreath of leaves round its neck, which we

imagined they must be leading to sacrifice. In Narboo's absence we had no means of enquiring, but hearing from Tendook later in the evening that a great feast was to come off at the Goompa the following day, to which he and several of our camp were bidden, we felt no doubt that their intentions regarding the poor beast were simply

to slay and eat. Near the Goompa several other monks, seated on a mendong, were enjoying their evening's potation of hot 'murwa,' in which they kindly invited us to participate; one of them, taking the tube out of his own mouth, offering it to me.

Passing the room in which was the praying cylinder, we heard the little bell still tinkling, and peeping in saw the old monk sitting in precisely the same attitude in which

we had seen him in the morning. A few more steps and we again stood in the yard surrounding the Goompa. All was silent here, and everything looked weird in the fast gathering twilight. Above us frowned the dark and massive walls of the monastery, presenting an appearance of solidity and strength almost akin to the mountains with which they were environed. Beyond towered the snows in the darkling sky, cold and passionless, and immutable. At their feet lay the valleys bathed in profoundest gloom. Now and again the subdued roar of a torrent reached us from some far-distant gorge, but before the ear had fairly caught the sound the breeze that bore it on its wings had passed over us, and it was gone. Occasionally a monk glided by, muttering to himself, and there was something grand and majestic in the whole scene, and ineffably solemn. From this spot we seem to look not upwards, but across to the snows, and although between them and us there is a great gulf formed by the valley, yet they seem almost near enough to touch. Immediately opposite rise the gentle acclivities of Nursyng, step above step; and in the formation of this mountain, to my own mind, there is something mysterious and awful—too regular seemingly to have been hewn by Nature's hand, yet impossible to have been fashioned by any human or mechanical agency whatever.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE OLD LAMA'S BLESSING.

THUS monastery is a school for the native 'nobility and gentry' of the province, and some of the pupils are very young, but all wear the same monastic garb. The little son of Tchebu Lama is amongst them; a meek-eyed pensive boy, as pretty and about as dirty a little urchin as one could possibly see, who persisted nevertheless on taking my hand, and leading me about in quite the English fashion.

On returning to our camp, we met Pugla-wallah going up to the Goompa to receive the Lama's blessing; a thing he did regularly at morn and eve, and probably at other times as well. On three several occasions had we seen him present himself for the purpose; probably acting on the principle of the old woman who made a point of being confirmed on every available opportunity, because, as she said, it was 'good for the rheumatiz.' The chief Lama, however, whose province it was to administer the blessing, evidently suffered, like a patriarch of old, from dimness of vision; he did not appear to recognise him on either occasion, but gave it repeatedly

in the customary form and in a manner very apostolic, the recipient kneeling whilst the old Lama, laying both hands upon his head, repeated a short formula, which we deeply regretted we could not understand.

As the day wore on, our camp became exceedingly boisterous, the greater number being occupied in a carousal over their favourite beverage whilst smoking 'tseeang,' a tobacco from Thibet generously given them by the monks. Others, more soberly inclined, played at a game very much like the Italian one called 'mora,' and a kind of chess, as well as quoits, which, however, is not more remarkable than our playing backgammon, also battledore and shuttlecock, which are both said to be Chinese and Tartarian games.

I was greatly amused by watching them from the little eminence which I had climbed for the purpose. Many amongst them were in gay attire, wearing bracelets, and ponderous earrings, and brilliant fabrics, which they had produced from their bundles, out of compliment to the monks and the people of the country who had come to welcome them. Fanchyng, too, was more than ordinarily decked out with pomps and vanities.

'When I reach home, Mem sahib,' she exclaimed, climbing the knoll where she had descried me, and throwing herself down by my side, 'I will weave you such a pretty dress, striped with red, and green, and orange, much prettier than this one,' looking down at the one she wore. She formed such a contrast to myself in my

sombre garb, that I was forcibly reminded of a question Lattoo once put to me.

'Mem sahib,' she said one day when we were down at the Teesta, 'why do you always wear those sad colours? I don't like them,' speaking in the brusque, petulant way she sometimes did.

'I am in mourning, Lattoo,' I replied. 'It is the custom of English ladies to wear black when they lose a friend.'

'Black is the colour of night, Mem sahib, and yet you believe that when you die you reach Nirvana—meaning Heaven—at once. Then why are you not glad when your *logue* die, and wear the colours we see in the birds, and flowers, and falling water when the sun shines? God doesn't make *your* colours. Ah, well!' she continued, as if thinking aloud, 'Christāns are strange people.'

I felt the force of her words, and my thoughts recurred to the sons and daughters of Republican Spain, who demonstrate *their* faith in the Christianity they profess by having cheerful music at their funerals, and in decking themselves with flowers.

The Limboos and Lepchas also wear flowers in their hair for two or three months after the death of a relative, which is their only emblem of mourning; and when one comes to think of it, the symbol is very beautiful and poetical, for what is so transient as a flower?

The sun now declining, the inharmonious music of the Goompa again called the Lamas to their orisons, and,

obedient to the summons, they were soon scrambling up the hill-side on their way to the temple. After their departure, our people, deprived of all restraint, grew more noisy than before, and those who were not already lying on their backs immersed in slumber, their heavy stertorous breathing indicating that it was anything but the balmy sleep of nature, were in a very excited state, whilst some were very quarrelsome, the foremost of whom was Hatti. I could descry his Herculean form in the shadowy twilight, zig-zagging amidst the camp fires, threatening each moment to lose his equilibrium and subside on the top of one of the burning piles, like a voluntary human sacrifice. He seemed moreover to possess some great grievance, for he was lamenting loudly, amongst the jeers of his companions. At length I saw him approaching, with great mental determination apparently, but physically *hors de combat*, and I retired precipitately within my tent, like a snail into its shell at the approach of the enemy; but I soon heard his footsteps on the grass outside, and his very shaky voice addressing me.

'Mem sahib! Mem sahib! *Mab! Bab!*' (Father, Mother), that being the touching mode of appeal invariably made use of by all Orientals, when they want to work upon your feelings, and obtain a favour.

At first I turned a deaf ear to these endearing appellations, but importunity prevailing, I at last peeped out of my tent. But he had arrived at that stage when to

render himself intelligible was an impossibility, and the redress he had come thus far to seek was consequently not to be obtained. Bidding him *jao* (begone), in the most commanding tone I could assume, I shouted for Catoo, who answered the summons in an exceedingly amiable frame of mind, but looking as though he too had been indulging in similar orgies. He succeeded, however, in leading Hatti away: and I watched them both reel down the knoll to their own camp, at the imminent risk of their necks, flattering myself that I had seen the last of Hatti. But lo, I soon heard his voice appealing to me in more beseeching accents than before; this time crying like a child, and holding a small parchment document, which bore the government seal. What it all meant I had not the ghost of an idea. Led away again by Catoo, he returned repeatedly to the charge, until F——, who had strolled away some distance from the camp, happily came to the rescue. Hatti was now carried off ignominiously in the arms of three stalwart Bhootias, and we had every reason to believe he then collapsed for the night, for we heard no more of him.

Our Kitmutgar next makes his appearance, also bathed in tears—it is wonderful what a depressing effect murwa seems to have upon their spirits. He has, he informs us, broken one of the burra sahib's 'tumblets,' and is afraid there will be a great '*bobbery*.' 'Tumblet' is the accepted mode of pronunciation for tumbler with all the natives of Bengal, with whom a tray is 'trail,' slip-

pers are 'silpits,' a box is a 'bockas,' and champagne is 'simpkin,' as everybody knows. But then, on the other hand, we Anglo-Indians take our revenge by speaking execrable Hindustani, particularly my own sex, with many of whom the adoption of Indian words is beginning to amount to a species of slang, a custom unhappily growing more and more common. Thus you will probably hear a lady, with questionable taste, remark that she has been *dikked*, *dik* being the generic term for vexation or worry; or that she has at last succeeded in *pukerowing* a good *naukar* for her *butchas*, meaning that she has found a good nurse for her children; or that her husband has been made *pucka*, that is to say, settled in his appointment; whilst new arrivals are invariably called '*griffs*;' dinner parties are '*burra khanas*;' an order is always a '*hookum*;' and '*tumasha*' is used to express excitement of all kinds, pleasurable or otherwise; and so on *ad infinitum*.

On reading my home letters again more carefully, whilst sitting alone in my tent this evening, I found in one a postscript, which in my hurry I had entirely overlooked. It was from the friend who had enclosed Lattoo's little effusion, and who, having gone down to the hut with me more than once, knew her well. The postscript stated that since the letter had been written, Lattoo had grown much worse, and was suffering from a dangerous malady not infrequent to the valleys of Darjeeling, and was now wholly confined to her bed. A Lama had been there

twice with dorje and cymbals; but the poor little half-enlightened soul had derived no spiritual comfort from his visitations, neither did they avail her aught bodily.

Before retiring for the night, on F——'s assuring me he could send it easily by a baggage coolie early in the morning, I wrote Lattoo another short letter. I had not much to say, but I told her how I wished I could be with her, and that we were now no more to linger on our way, but should be steadily marching homewards on the morrow. I told her too how constantly I bore her in my thoughts, and how at those moments when, at night and morn, I recalled to remembrance all those who were absent, and dearest to my heart, commending them to the care of One who surely cared for them, she might be sure I did not forget her either.

I lay awake many hours that night, thinking of the poor child so ill whilst I was far away; thinking of her as I first knew her, the little, blithe, winsome thing, with whom all the pleasantest associations of my mountain life were blended; thinking of her as I last saw her, standing by my side in the gloomy twilight, till I realised more than ever how utterly all systems of religion fail in giving comfort to the dying, save the Christian, and how vague and hopeless and remote is the Nirvana of the Buddhist. Falling asleep at last, it was only natural that I should see her in my dreams. Now she was lying on her little bed of ferns, and I was reading to her; now again she seemed to be a saint in a church

window, with an aureola round her head, standing with an amulet or charm-box in her hand, which even in my dream I seemed to wonder at, as being an incongruity; then somehow the amulet seemed to change into a cross, and then again into flowers. The sun was shining through the window, as I fancied, and the rainbow colours of her raiment fell upon the pavement, and some also upon me. Then I saw her sitting in the position in which I had always hoped to paint her; and then she dissolved into a picture again, and was the 'Madonna di Sedile' at Florence, the expression of whose face no artist, of all the hundreds who have copied it—as though the hand that painted it had almost been divine—has yet been able to reproduce. Then I awoke, and falling asleep again I saw her once more as she used to be, strong and well, cutting down the long canes of bamboo for my pony as of old; and there were the buffalo, the hut, and the chongas of milk, and the whole pastoral scene rose pleasantly before me.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE SEPOYS KEEP THEIR EYE UPON ME.

THE next morning we despatched two baggage coolies for home, laden with things we no longer needed. To a third, who bore Lattoo's letter only, we gave instructions to travel as fast as he could, to deliver it into her own or her father's hands, and then to return with news to the great Rungheet, and await our arrival there; for, having no load to carry, he ought to reach Darjeeling at least three days before the rest.

Now that day had come, and the cheerful and joyous sun was shining, I felt far less desponding about her than I did last night. After all, perhaps she was not so dangerously ill as they had said, and I might still see her once again. At any rate I could do nothing; so I tried to be as hopeful as I could, and while I made rapid sketches of the Goompa and its surroundings, the time passed pleasantly enough. F—— meanwhile scoured the country, and explored the valleys; the Sepoys not following *him* on his explorations, as might reasonably have been expected. They did not even watch C——'s movements, who remained inside his tent all the morning, writing, where, surrounded with despatch boxes and im-

portant-looking papers tied with red tape, he could be seen by any one passing by the open doorway, a circumstance which might, one would think, have aroused their suspicions; but they confined their attentions to me, never leaving my side for an instant, no doubt thinking I was bent on mischief.

My own idea is, that they regarded my easel and formidable sketching paraphernalia as an apparatus for mapping out the country, and looked upon me as a sort of government surveyor! Nor was this supposition at all unreasonable, for it cannot fail to be within their recollection that war had followed closely upon Dr. Hooker's visit to their country, although *he* was only a 'poor harmless leaf collector,' as the Kajee himself had called him. The fear of 'annexation' is the very bane and *bête noir* of these people's lives; and I must confess I do not envy the feelings of the otherwise happy and thriving peasantry, in the knowledge that they have a powerful and a *greedy* nation—as they think—on the borders of their own land, which could swallow them up at a single gulp, were it so minded.

In vain both Narboo and Tendook explained that I was merely making '*taswir*.' Looking at them dubiously, as though they regarded them as traitors to their country, and parties to the dreadful conspiracy, they shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders, and appeared more mystified than ever. They pulled their mustaches—that is to say, the few who possessed

those adornments, whilst those who did not sought diligently over the Sahara-like desert of their chins for a stray hair that might have survived the ravages of the tweezers at the morning's plucking—and then pressed more closely round me than before, commenting on my proceedings in subdued but very perplexing whispers. The Lamas, however, looked on complacently, and gave me no annoyance beyond their having eaten garlic for

breakfast, and offered up their early sacrifice of 'tseeang,' the remains of whose morning incense was anything but pleasing.

'Mem Sahib! what *are* you doing?' enquired one of the Sepoys at length, apparently unable to bear the suspense any longer.

'Only making a picture of your beautiful country,' I replied, Narboo interpreting, 'in case I should forget it when I am far away.'

'What! Have you no trees and mountains then in your own country? It cannot be for *this* only that you have come hither.'

As to the Kajee, I cannot but think we were indebted for his civility solely to the knowledge he possessed, that the loss of part of the territory, in 1849, was entirely due to his and the Dewān's gross treatment of Drs. Hooker and Campbell, and that the only way to counteract whatever evil intentions we might previously have possessed, was to strive to conciliate us, by showing ourselves and our people every possible consideration.

The remainder of the day was spent in gossiping with the monks, with whom F—— and I had grown quite familiar, each having our especial favourites, and knowing all by sight. As we were to leave on the morrow, some of our men came up to the Goompa to receive the blessing of the chief Lama—Pugla-wallah of course amongst the number. Our own parting, too, with these kind and hospitable monks was almost affectionate, for we would fain have lingered longer in their midst. Through Tendook we learnt more and more about them, and were none the less impressed in their favour. These followers of Budh, living lives of devotion and meditation, year after year, through winter frost and summer sunshine, amidst the great solitudes of nature, are, to my mind, one of the most interesting features of the glorious Himalaya.

As Budh, or Boodha, preached principles of universal brotherhood amongst all tribes and nations, his followers have no particular caste. From this fact one would suppose them to be the more accessible to the truths of Christianity; but, as yet, little has been done to convert the Buddhists of the Sikkim Himalaya, compared with other missions. As far as I am aware, the Church of England has sent none of its missionaries to work amongst them. The Lutherans some years ago sent several to labour on the Moravian, or self-supporting, principle, but the blending of 'God and Mammon' did not answer well; and except in rare instances, the German mission proved rather a failure, more than one having yielded to the seductive influences of tea-planting; whilst others became pork merchants, one of whom, finding the latter, *arthally* speaking, more remunerative, at length devoted his whole energies to the practice of that art. May the Recording Angel drop a tear, and blot out the register against him of this inglorious departure from his first love!

Having listened at daybreak to the instruments of torture for the last time, we were preparing for the start the following morning, the tent-pegs being knocked out of the ground. I was still inside busily finishing the packing of portmanteaus, &c., when the old priestess, and several of the women who had visited me yesterday, came to say farewell. Perceiving that I did not make my exit, they evidently imagined, in some nebulous

kind of way, that I was to be packed bodily up in the tent, and conveyed like the rest of the baggage. Determining to have another glimpse, they first peeped at me through the chinks in the canvas, and then made a most unscrupulous invasion into the tent itself, and it was not without considerable difficulty that I could get rid of them. Some of the Lamas, too, descended from the Goompa to see the last of us, and wish us a hearty 'God speed.' At nine o'clock we quitted this interesting place with great reluctance, passing for the first few miles of our march many large 'mendongs,' and feeling from these indications that we were still on sacred ground. One of these contained no less than forty-three slabs, bearing the usual inscriptions, as well as figures of Budh himself, in his accustomed attitude, and with the same passionless stare on his countenance; except in one instance, in which, an eye having been knocked out of him, he looked as though he were winking at our people as they plodded along.

These inscriptions read from right to left, and it was curious to note the care those of our men took who happened to pass on the *right* of the mendong, to do so without looking at it, lest perchance they should read the sacred words backwards. Even the Lepchas have great dread and a superstitious horror of so doing. One of these mendongs was so exceedingly ancient that we could scarcely discern any inscriptions at all, save those wrought by old Time, which had written long sermons, in blurred letters, but very eloquent language. Above all waved

the branches of a funereal cypress, hung with bits of coloured rag, telling that some faithful Buddhist had bivouacked here not long ago, and made his lonely orisons.

On our way we meet a woman in the attire of a priestess, carrying a 'mani,' which she keeps twirling mechanically as she walks along. Other women also pass us, carrying sickly looking children in baskets on their way to the Goompa, to procure medicine and other forms of the healing art, in the shape of exorcisings, incantations, &c.

We are now once more in stirring life amongst the rustics, and smiling women wave salutations to us as we pass, whilst standing in their balconies, with spindle and distaff, for they are more civilised here by association with the monks, and watch us without fear. Like Zangting the land here is everywhere in a high state of cultivation, showing that the inhabitants are an industrious and thriving people. Amongst other things, we were particularly struck with the neat enclosures round each field, made of split bamboo canes, placed crosswise, the whole forming a picture of contentment and good husbandry.

Coming to a streamlet, C—— called a halt, and shouted for breakfast. The cook was following closely behind us, but the more important functionary bearing the commissariat was nowhere to be seen.

A fire was made in readiness, however, for the breakfast we *were* to have; but as he did not overtake us, we were forced to the unwilling conclusion, that on this occasion he must have gone on before, elated probably by the parting blessing in the shape of 'murwa,' which the hospitable Lamas no doubt had given them, before saying farewell. The moment we arrived at this appalling conclusion, under a deep sense of personal injury, we sent the *chef* flying down the mountain-side in hot pursuit, with instructions to bring the offender back, by the hair of his head if necessary.

'He'll turn up all right,' exclaimed F——, throwing himself on the ground, and lighting a cigar, that refuge for the hungry; but C—— and I, with no such source of comfort and consolation, stood peering through a field-glass for the first signs of the returning coolie. Now I fancied I saw him: but no, alas! it was only the stump of an old tree.

'There he is!' exclaimed C——, 'and the coolie behind.'

But it turned out to be only a Lama, followed by a Bhootia cow. As we waited thus, with our emotions subjected to alternate states of elation and depression, more than an hour elapsed before we saw the cook returning,

and even then alone, upon which we decide to go in pursuit ourselves.

Entering a forest, we followed a broad pathway for some considerable distance, till we came upon one diverging from that we were traversing; and then, and not till then, did the awful truth dawn upon us. 'Sprot' had no doubt mistaken this path for the one he should have pursued, and our hopes of coming across him faded away. Poor wretch! we never thought of him, I am afraid; but—the basket and its contents might be gone for ever.

CHAPTER LV.

WE OVERTAKE THE TIFFIN COOLIE, AND GRILL WHILST OUR MOORGHEE IS UNDERGOING THE SAME PROCESS.

DESCENDING the mountain, we were soon greeted by the distant roar of the Kullait, which we must cross before we can arrive at Rinchingpoong, our next camping place. The vegetation, now changing rapidly, becomes unlike anything we had yet seen; the tall straight trunks of the forest trees, principally sol, being completely taken possession of by an enormous serpent-like climber, which, winding itself round and round the trees, gradually strangles them by the process, reminding one of the 'Laocoön.' In some instances the trees themselves have not only decayed, but crumbled away, and the columns formed by the climber, which are both hollow and spiral, present one of the most singular phenomena in nature. The leaves of this gigantic parasite—a *calamus*—are vivid green, with a crimson and purple lining, measuring ten or twelve inches across. Choking everything in its cruel embrace, it roams the whole forest, till every tree is seized in its mighty grip.

Kökras also abound at this elevation, which coo plaintively, like our wood pigeon. The further we descend the more enormous becomes the forest-king, whose many-coloured leaves, creating a thick canopy, completely shut out the sky, its columns covered with rich traceries, formed by other and smaller parasites, that take possession of it in their turn. Here were seen the pointed arch, the fretted dome, the long aisle, and many painted windows; and we felt we were in a vast cathedral, where the kökras kept up a perpetual choral service.

The undergrowth is very slight in this forest, the soil consisting of loose sand; but I observed a very beautiful species of climbing fern, in full fructification, with serrated fronds, wonderfully fragile. As if emulating its monster prototype, it was catching hold of and playfully encircling everything within its reach, so that between them both bush and tree must have a hard life of it.

From the deep gorge at our feet now ascends the noise of myriads of cicadæ, a fly three inches long, which produces a peculiarly shrill and metallic 'clack, clack,' very painful to the ear, and almost deafening, when one is in their vicinity. The sound is caused by two horny plates across the back; and it would seem that man is a creature to whom music is a necessity, these cicadæ having been formerly used by the primitive people of the country as an instrument for the purpose. The plates, when pressed, create a modulation of sound,

which by practice and careful manipulation can be converted into a tune.

At length we reached the banks of this noble river, and were overtaken by the tiffin coolie. As we suspected, he had taken the wrong path, and after some time, not finding himself followed by any of the rest, had wisely resolved upon retracing his steps. We were far too hot and weak, from prolonged hunger, to scold him as severely as he deserved; and sheltering ourselves as well as we could from the burning sun, we sat and grilled, whilst the 'moorghee' was undergoing the same process over the fire opposite.

Here we had to wait till the river, one hundred and fifty feet broad, was bridged; and the usually phlegmatic Tendook might be seen clambering over rocks in a state of great excitement, threading his way in and out of the jungle which skirted its margin, in his endeavour to find some place where it was less broad, and might be spanned with safety. At last a spot was found where some large boulders in mid stream lessened its breadth, and jutting above the surface of the torrent, formed piers for the frail timbers to rest upon. In an hour a sufficiently strong bridge was constructed to take us over the boiling flood, and land us safely on the opposite shore. Where the current was less strong, some of the coolies swam across, striking out with each arm alternately, instead of both at the same moment.

The mountain we now climb is covered with a

dense undergrowth of wormwood, through which a pathway has to be cut. The natives use the dried wood of this herb as a tonic, which, when steeped in boiling water, makes a bitter and astringent drink. It is also much in use amongst Europeans. As is invariably the case, in proximity to these bushes, we were instantly

covered with large green caterpillars, and also attacked for the first time by the poisonous leech—a leech much smaller than that we are accustomed to see in England. F—— was the first to make the discovery by an intense smarting in his left foot, and on sitting down to ascertain the cause, he found that one had actually managed to work its way down into the toe of his boot. Tendook also was similarly attacked, and his feet and legs were bleeding sadly.

Travelling at this time of year, we fortunately escape the intolerable plague of these little pests, which exists during the rains, when natives passing through the jungle get infested with them by hundreds. The creatures even insinuate themselves beneath the tight bandages, with which they endeavour to shield their feet and legs from their bite.

When we reach the summit of the gorge, blue sky and purple mountains are once more visible. Looking across to Pemionchi, fourteen miles distant, behind which the stupendous Kinchinjunga rears its glittering crest, we once more catch sight of the Goompa, a tiny black speck on its summit, and soon reach the site of our encampment at Rinchingpoong. Here we are on historic if not on classic ground, it being the precise spot where our English soldiers were treacherously attacked by the Rajah of Sikkim's forces, twenty times their number, whom they bravely withstood notwithstanding.

Our arrival had not been anticipated here at any rate, and as our numbers, augmenting each moment, began to look formidable, beardless and effeminate-looking men, leaving their occupations, ascended from a little hollow in the mountains below, where peaceful huts like bee-hives lay nestling. Timid women also crept up after them, all regarding us with great wistful eyes, as if wondering what this unexpected aggression could possibly mean, their bewilderment increasing tenfold when we lighted fires, pitched tents, and in other ways

seemed to be permanently establishing ourselves in their neighbourhood.

Then, as shadows lengthened, and the golden line of light athwart the mountains ascended higher and higher with the sinking sun, the Mahomedan's vesper hour approached. Our kitmutgar, a true son of the Prophet, who until now had been sitting balanced on his heels, as he choked over the gurgling hubble-bubble, left this delightful exercise, and was on his feet in an instant, and throwing his chuddah on the ground, and facing the west, began 'kowtowing' to the day-god, utterly regardless of whoever might be looking on. They do not 'enter into their closets,' these followers of Mahomed, but love to pray in 'market-places' and crowded thoroughfares, but they seem none the less sincere for a' that.

Thrice a day should the good Moslem prostrate himself to the dust; but our kitmutgar is the only one who, as far as I see, of all the followers of his creed who are in camp (and they are not a few), performs any devotions at all. The others probably, as wayfarers, have a direct dispensation from the Prophet, or may be allowed to combine all three offices in one; and a truly wonderful performance it is, accomplished only by great plasticity of limb, and long practice. They kiss the earth, as suddenly raise themselves, and stand erect without bending. They raise the arms, they genuflect, and doubling up again, bow the forehead to the dust—a process repeated many times.

F—— has little respect for the creed, or its worshipers either, I am afraid, and, of all things, likes to interrupt them when engaged in their religious exercises. Pretending not to be aware of their occupation, he may be heard shouting from afar, 'Ho! you kitmutgar there; come here; bring so and so,' etc. Now this entails—that is to say, if the order is regarded—the necessity of beginning his prayers all over again, for, according to their ritual, they may not go on where they left off; so that I doubt whether the poor wretch was ever left in peace and quiet sufficiently long to get further than the middle of them at the best of times, if so far. Looking towards Pemionchi, we could fancy we almost heard its wild music, as the sun, declining behind the hills, summoned the monks to their devotions also. Nor have the Bhootias—'benighted heathen' (?)—forgotten to pay their tribute to the Great Unseen, but have raised, according to their wont, a little cairn of stones, covered with the usual flags of many colours.

About a mile distant stands another monastery, a three-storeyed building, with wooden balconies, shut in by jalousies; such a quaint specimen of architecture, all odds and ends, and apparently in a very untenantable condition. From its appearance I am

inclined to think the old Lama's statement was correct, and that since our annexation the monks have suffered great poverty, here at any rate, for they seemed to be in anything but a flourishing condition. Several ill-clad Lamas, of a much lower class I should say than those of Pemionchi, came across to us, on observing the establishment of our camp, and with their wonted hospitality brought with them presents of rice, eggs, milk, and moorghees.

Sitting outside our tent, we observed a group of Limboos, who, having killed a kid, and singed it over the fire to remove the hair, were roasting it whole, and devouring it skin and all. Repulsive as this may seem, C—— informs us subsequently that the Abors, a hill people in Assam, amongst whom he lived for some years, do not even *kill* their animals first, but actually roast them alive, declaring it adds to the flavour of the flesh. In another direction our cook—one of the Faithful—having finished his orisons, is busy over the flesh-pots of the 'Faringhi,' like one engaged in the mysteries of the cabalistic art, whilst his assistant, called a '*mashalchee*' in the vernacular, sits patiently grinding curry. C——, meanwhile deep in housekeeping matters, may be seen struggling within the depths of his commissariat baskets as he stands up to his ankles in straw. Opposite, the Shikaree sits leisurely embalming the spoils of the woods, shot during the day's march. From below comes the peaceful murmur of our camp, and the little village, and the wild

lowing of cattle, very different from that of our land; and twilight gradually steals over us with its mellow and softening influences, till night at length unfolds her wing and soothes all to rest, when the silence is uninterrupted, as we sit in pleasant converse over our camp fire.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE MOUNTAIN STORM.

The following morning, rising very early, I lifted the flaps which formed the door of my little tabernacle, just at the moment of Earth's expectation of day, and watched the orient lights steal upwards, till the sky was bathed in an elysian glory. It was Sunday; and a text, and a sermon too, were furnished to my hand. Surely there never was such a grand old preacher as Nature.

At noon, whilst the sky above was azure, and all around bathed in a flood of sunshine, we watched a storm raging in the distance. Below the snowy range, volumes of cloud and leaden vapour, apparently whirled up from the arid plains, were melting in tremendous strife against the great buttress of Pemionchi, at which they rushed full tilt.

It is singular to note how these storms frequently spend all their fury upon one solitary mountain. As if resenting its impeding their further progress, they determine with thundering might to attack it. Travelling along the valley from east to west, black columns of heaving vapour, driven into collision by strong currents, were seen to

scatter each other into fragments, like giant armies contending. It was a glorious sight to sit and watch the warfare, and see them strike the mountain spur, which seemed to repulse and drive them back by the very force and recoil of their own fury.

Only once, thank God! have I been in a storm in these mountains. Thank God, I say, and mean it; for danger in them lurks, and unseen forces are at work, in the rending rock and landslip, which constantly occur. On the occasion to which I refer, F—— and I had gone down to Kursiong, the little settlement of tea-planters which we passed through on our way to Darjeeling, and where the neglected and uncared-for cemetery is now a sweet little 'God's-acre,' fenced in, and planted with shrubs; and near it, on those who journey up the roadway from the plains, what time the sun is travelling towards the west, the shadow of the cross now falls, for there is an English church beside it, lately built—no matter by *whose* instrumentality.

In a quiet valley beneath Kursiong are chalybeate springs; but not to drink the waters had we come, but for a few days' change of air and scene, and were putting up at the comfortable little road-side hotel.

Having arrived at the limits of our stay, we had arranged to start homewards on the morrow, when the morrow's sun brought with it a cloud 'no bigger than a man's hand,' which travelling onwards, quickly spread itself over the whole expanse of sky, dishevelling the face

of nature, and dimming the sun in heaven. The winds we meet with in the hills are usually south-easterly, bringing the clouds landwards, from a distance of 400 miles, where roll the mighty wind-tossed billows of the Indian Ocean.

Down came the rain, pattering upon the wooden shingles of the roof of our hostel with an earnestness and determination which filled us with anxiety and forebodings concerning our morning's ride. Hoping it might subside in the course of a few hours, we postponed our departure till ten o'clock, at which time, as there seemed no probability of its ceasing, F——, who had duty at Darjeeling which obliged him to return, decided upon starting himself, advising me to remain till the following day, when he promised to ride down to fetch me.

Not liking to be left alone however, and feeling sure I could bear the journey as well as he could, being accustomed to a drenching—for one almost becomes amphibious after having survived one 'rainy season' in the Himalaya,—I determined upon going too.

Rainy season indeed!—rather should it be called pelting season, douching season, ducking season, drowning season, swishy, swashy, sloppy season; anything in fact but the delusive and euphemistic title of 'rainy season,' suggestive of soft vernal showers.

Our ponies accordingly having been brought round, we mounted in spite of the earnest entreaties on the part of mine host, who implored us to alter our plans, and not

attempt the journey of twenty miles in such weather. But perfectly inexperienced as we then were as to the effects which a few hours' downpour produces on this road, and not feeling sure that the advice to prolong our stay was wholly disinterested, we started, the rain wetting us through and through before we had proceeded a quarter of a mile.

The road to Darjeeling, as I have elsewhere said, is a broad and splendid one, skirting the mountains, and winding round their stupendous buttresses, like a tiny thread as seen from the distance, but in reality wide enough for fifteen horsemen to ride abreast. In the dry season it remains in good condition; but during the rains a regular staff of 'Public Works' officers are stationed at some part or other of the road, in readiness to repair injuries caused to it by landslips (many of which not unfrequently occur in a single day); to remove obstructions created by portions of fallen rock, as well as to make and repair bridges, which span the various ravines and waterfalls.

We had not gone more than two miles, when we seemed to come in for the thick of the storm. The rain, which at first came down perpendicularly, now descended in slanting sheets. On came cloud after cloud, scurrying past us, blown along by the wind, whilst the rain was absolutely blinding. My pony, albeit a plucky little beast, pulled up constantly, as though it felt quite unable to stem its fury, so mercilessly did it pelt him.

'What is that in the distance?' I enquired of F——

in advance, as, turning a sharp angle in the road, we suddenly came in sight of a seething torrent, an opaque mass, of a deep red tinge, bearing down, like the floodgates of a mighty river opened. 'That cannot be the Kursiong Fall; it surely could not have swollen to such an extent in so few hours!'

'Yes, it is,' replied he; 'and see! it covers the bridge, road, and everything with its waves. Come on fast, for it will get worse each moment we linger.'

'Hark! what is that?' we both exclaimed simultaneously, as a muffled sound reached us, like that of distant artillery, accompanied by a vibration in the air, and followed by what seemed the rattling of musketry. Instantly a tremendous portion of rock came crashing down with lightning speed, leaping from boulder to boulder, beneath the turbid, seething, boiling mass, and then, bounding over the road, was lost in the gorge of the Balasun; this fall feeding the river of that name, which flows 6,000 feet below.

I wondered whether it would be possible to pass it; I felt my cheek blanch. F——, however, did not leave me to decide; but, with the promptitude and decision he invariably evinces in danger, he dismounted, and giving his pony's bridle to the syce, and seizing mine, we passed below it, the great volume of water falling with a plash and crash that were positively deafening, whilst the bridge trembled beneath our feet. My pony started as it came in for the extra douching; but F——'s firm grip

was upon him, and he almost dragged him forward, the water tearing across the road in waves almost up to its knees.

Proceeding further, we found not only that the falls themselves, and once placid mountain-streams, were in the state I have described, but that each ravine and gorge, in which there had been no appearance of water when we passed it only a few days ago, had become a boiling cataract.

The tempest now grew more fierce, whilst the darkness was that of twilight, or an eclipse; black cloud-armies, which met together from south and north with marvellous rapidity, coming into collision on the summit of Senshul, right ahead of us. The clouds opened, and a broad ribbon of electric fire struck downwards. At the same moment the thunder pealed forth; both were simultaneous—the blinding flash and the deafening peal: nothing is ever done by halves in the Himalaya; the mountains shook, all nature trembled. Another flash of blue lightning, this time extending obliquely in an easterly direction. Bang, bang, boom, went the thunder; whilst the wave of sound, driven back by one mountain, was caught by another, and another, followed by a thousand reverberations, till it was echoed by listening hills, miles and miles away, and heaven seemed bombarding earth with the whole of its grand artillery. This did not alarm us, however; we were too much used to thunder and lightning at Darjeeling to think much about it, and were

once actually *in* a thunder cloud, the electric current flashing about us everywhere; besides which, Senshul, its head buried in cloud, was the highest peak in this direction, on which the storm was certain to spend its fury. It was a grand and awful sight to see this warfare of the elements, as the angry clouds assailed its summit, scarcely more than 2,000 feet above us. We could almost fancy we saw the Spirit of the Storm riding on them, and urging them to battle. It was truly magnificent and miserable, for we could not ride fast enough against all these elements to keep ourselves warm, and the wind blew with cutting force through our drenched garments, and we were saturated through every pore.

After a few moments there was an ominous lull; the wind ceased, and there was complete silence save the roar of the thunder. The wind veered completely, blowing from north to south, increasing in violence each moment, till the clouds which enveloped us swept by with a speed which made us positively giddy, and we felt as if *they* were stationary and we ourselves were being borne along on the wings of the wind.

See! Yonder goes a splendid old tree, torn up by its roots. Watch it as it is whirled and tossed by the force of the eddying tide, as though it had been a mere log. Crash follows crash; but on, still on we speed, till we reach another gorge, the bridge spanning which, we already knew, *had* been carried away by a previous storm, and

was undergoing reconstruction; a small temporary one, however, having been substituted for it. To cross this we should have to leave the main road, and follow a narrow pathway a short distance to the right. Until this moment the fact of the large bridge having been destroyed had escaped our memory; and was it reasonable to suppose, after what we had witnessed, that the temporary one would still be standing?

Deep anxiety was depicted in F——'s countenance, as he bade me urge my pony forward. The same thought had evidently occurred to us both. If the little bridge were indeed broken, we were effectually cut off from Darjeeling; whilst it was more than an hour since we passed the Kursiong Fall, and we dared not think what *it* had become by this time; probably the torrent had carried, not only the bridge, but the road itself down the 'khud,' rendering all passage impossible. Another angle of the winding road, and we came close to it, and found it still standing. F—— alighted, and hastily examining it, cried:

'Now or never! Have you the courage?'

Without waiting a reply, he seized my pony's bridle, and with a desperate effort induced the affrighted animal to cross it. As we did so we felt the planks upheave, whilst the torrent swept beneath. F——'s syce quickly followed with the other pony; and once safely arrived on the other side, we remained under the shelter of an overhanging rock, to give our ponies a few minutes' rest, and

watch the breaking up of the bridge, which we knew must happen almost immediately.

Higher and higher rose the surging mass; now it submerged it. Still it held out bravely, and not for a full quarter of an hour did it succumb. Then, with a tremendous crash, the posts gave way, and the planks, which had been resisting greater pressure every instant, wrenched asunder, were borne down into the boiling sea, as though they had been straws.

Terrible sounds were heard in the air, as portions of earth gave way above and below us, followed by the dull thud of falling soil. Now again the hollow boom and echo of some riven rock; now the crash of some noble tree. The thunder still pealed, though the lightning was less vivid, the angry storm, having spent enough of its fury on Senshul, now travelling westward to 'have it out' with some other mountain top.

But our danger, instead of lessening, increased each step, as the soil became saturated with moisture; and we rode on in silence, not knowing what might happen at any moment. Two or three years ago a fearful landslip occurred near Darjeeling, carrying a whole village down the 'khud,' and burying huts and their dwellers in its *débris*. These landslips are more to be dreaded than aught else, as they may happen at any part of the road.

Reaching a spot within eight miles of Darjeeling, we saw a tree lying across the road, and found two bullocks lying dead beside it, the hackery to which they were

attached being smashed to atoms, whilst one of the bullocks was literally cut in two. It was a sickening sight, and the ponies could not be induced to pass it till they had been blindfolded, the red flood eddying down the road.

Another turn, and embosomed in trees, we saw before us the little wooden châlet, or hostel, which forms the only break for travellers along this twenty miles of road; and, having once reached it, we thankfully took refuge, determining to remain till the rain should have ceased, and the water in the ravines subsided.

What a luxury to be under cover once more! and to hear even mutilated English spoken in these wilds, as the buxom hostess—surely born to be a landlady—greets us at the homely porch, and asks us to walk in.

With her help—for she ransacked her boxes for dry clothes—I was soon sitting before a blazing wood fire, in a dress very much too big for me, particularly about the neck and waist. The good woman meanwhile in an adjoining room was busy in the preparation of a repast; whilst F—— went off to the stables to see after the well-being of the ponies. Moralising as I sat waiting, I came to the conclusion that Solomon was somewhat wrong in his ethics after all, and that 'a contented mind is a continual feast' only so long as one is not hungry.

Soon after our arrival a party of equestrians, amongst whom we recognised old acquaintances, came galloping up. They had also been overtaken by the storm on

their way from Darjeeling, but having taken shelter in a hut by the wayside, were scarcely in such a thoroughly moist condition as that in which we had arrived. Few travellers, even in fair weather, feel disposed to pass this lonely little hostelry without paying it a friendly visit; and truly a more inviting and peaceful little place could hardly be found in which to sojourn awhile. It is built entirely of wood, and surrounded by primeval forest. In 'fine vicissitude' a mountain streamlet, meandering down the steep declivity through deep hollows, flows on either side with a soft murmuring sound.

Many weeks have we spent in this homely little châlet! wandering through the sombre labyrinth of its primeval forests, by mossy glen and ferny dell; the mountain peak, seen through the fern-clad trunks of the forest trees; the cloud drift that hangs beneath its summit; the faint colours of the dawn, the shimmering heat of noontide, the pathos which calm evening brings, the purity of moonlight, and the silent majesty of night, all, all speaking of something far beyond itself—a glory indefinable, but real notwithstanding—which I can never find words to express.

In an hour's time the rain ceased; and it was glorious then to watch the vapour ascend the valleys, and hang about the black scarped precipices, and tree-clad mountain-tops which held it fast.

In the evening, by which time the torrents had subsided—which they do with a rapidity no less marvellous

than that with which they appear—we resumed our journey to Darjeeling, and learnt on reaching it that seven landslips had occurred in the immediate neighbourhood, carrying away portions of some roads, and blocking up others.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE RISHEE.

Having halted at Rinchingpoong yesterday—for I now resume the account of our journey in Sikkim—we were to make up for our day's rest by starting earlier than usual this morning, having a long march before us. We strike tents therefore whilst the silver mist still sleeps in the valleys, and the lower mountains are only tipped with the sun's golden finger.

Travelling due south for some considerable distance, we began to descend a steamy tropical gorge; and here again another change of scene awaited us. We were now in a region choked with vegetation, and wholly tropical, and passed under many varieties of palm, whose plumes gently waved overhead, and whose trunks furnished a home for wondrous aerial plants and orchids in bloom, the atmosphere being laden with the perfume of flowers. Wending our way through this labyrinth of green, I was under the impression for a long time that we were approaching some native village, from the perpetual sound of that which I alone imagined could proceed from a blacksmith's forge. 'Chink, chink,' went the

supposed hammer upon the anvil, with measured stroke, whilst another produced a 'chink, chink,' in a slightly different note, creating that discordant, yet at the same time musical and metallic, sound which proceeds from a blacksmith's shed. So entirely suggestive was it, that one could not help picturing to one's self the form of the swarthy Vulcans, as they wielded the hammer with unerring hand.

Presently the sound grew fainter, and on enquiring I found that it was produced by a bird which inhabits a certain elevation in these mountain gorges. This was soon exchanged for the 'clack, clack' of the cicadæ, and the screech of monkeys, which climbed the trees to have a better look at us, and blinked and scratched their bald heads in utter bewilderment, as though recognising us in some way as belonging to their species, yet unable to make us out. They peered querulously and earnestly through the palm-fronds. Some, looking at us over their shoulders, clutched the branches with nervous grip; others faced us boldly, as much as to say, 'Come on!' 'Hadn't you better try?' 'I'm your match,' and so on; and then scuttled away into the denser forest uttering a shrill whoop which made the gorge ring far and near.

As we scrambled down the mountain side, an insect now greeted us with a singular but very musical noise, resembling the perpetual and loud ringing of a hand-bell, and the air was full of the hum of busy insect life. In

this land, so fruitful of living creatures, one cannot help being forcibly struck with the singular way in which not only bird and insect, but floral life also, has its habitat in particular belts or zones.

We were now surrounded by such rank luxuriance of vegetation, that the eye could not penetrate it, and the opposite side of the gorge, and the river at our feet, were alike hidden, as with a leafy curtain. After passing more palms, we brushed our way through tall pampas-grass, crowned with its flossy heads of violet bloom, and reached the Rishee, a babbling stream, filtering itself through mossy stones, beneath trees from which hang parasites in flower. What a festival of perfume and colour here awaited us! Such a fairy Eden and 'Midsummer Night's Dream' was it altogether, that one regretted one could no longer believe heart and soul in fairies!

Here it was destined that we should remain an hour or two, the river having to be crossed. Watching the coolies wade it in the shallows, I threw myself down on the soft carpet of ferns on its margin, whilst F—— and C—— went off to find a place where it could be bridged. Gorgeous butterflies flitted everywhere around us, or poised themselves on stones just peeping above the surface of the water, their wings erect, like ocean nautili in full sail. Dragon-flies skimmed hither and thither, playing at 'hide and seek'; long prosaic chrysalides, swathed in their white sheets like new-made mummies, lay stretched on the horizontal branches of the trees; others dangled beneath

the branches, suspended by tiny threads, and encased in coffins of silver and gold, awaiting Nature's call to burst their fetters and flee away. These 'aurelias,' of which there are two kinds, are wondrously beautiful. The fibre, or whatever it may be, in which they are enclosed has all the appearance of polished metal; and some seem made of brightest silver, others of brightest gold.

A dusty bee, now crawling up my dress, first covers me with golden pollen, and buzzing about my ear, as if expecting to find honey, stings me for the disappointment, and hies away. Looking upwards, I find that I am being surrounded by a little army of cocoons, which unfolding themselves from the leaves in which they had lain, and unwinding their silken threads, came tumbling head over heels upon me, no doubt thinking me the shortest way to the ground. Lizards, darting to and fro, left their scaly tails behind them, and everything was instinct with vitality.

During this digression the temporary bridge across the Rishee has been constructed, and the khansamah and F—— now simultaneously appeared to announce that 'tiffin' is ready further up the river. We reached our trysting-place just in time to see Fanchyng—who had come hither to fetch water—standing on a stone in mid-stream, creating a little island of brightness all amongst the dark trees, as a wandering waif of sunshine, glancing through the foliage, shone upon her many-coloured dress, and crowned her with a shower of

golden shimmer. It was a sweltering valley, and we did small justice—for the first time, I may truly say, since we started on our travels—to the ample tiffin that lay spread before us, as we sat listening to the river, which, trickling over stones, struck notes as sweet as those of an Æolian harp. We miss the 'ozone,' that tonic of the mountains; but soon, toiling up the sultry gorge, we found ourselves once more in a bracing atmosphere; and on looking back whence we had climbed, we could see a deadly miasmatic vapour floating above the river, unseen when we were enveloped in it, and felt truly thankful that we were not obliged to bivouac there for the night.

Sunset found us encamped on the green banks of the Great Rungheet, after having almost proved the death of an old patriarch, who, tending a herd of buffalo and cows, was apparently the sole inhabitant of the valley. Seeing a vast legion bearing down upon him from the heights, he probably thought the end of all things had arrived, or else that we were coming down to 'annex' him, cows, buffalo, and all. We witnessed his discomfiture a long way off whilst gradually descending the mountain, and observed him throwing his arms about wildly, as he knelt on the banks of the river, no doubt imploring the god of that element to save him, till at length rushing into it he seemed about to attempt to swim to the opposite shore. Then, as if it suddenly occurred to his mind that in the event of that deity disappointing him, he must inevitably perish in the boiling flood, he decided upon propitiating

the terrestrial deities instead, and ran to meet us in an attitude of supplication.

The poor fellow looked perfectly terror-stricken, obviously regarding us as dwellers of another world, though whether of the higher or lower we were compelled to remain in painful doubt. Nor did his fears abate until assured by our people that we were nothing more than harmless travellers from Darjeeling on our homeward way, having been on a 'pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of Pemiyonchi;' which consoling information not only completely calmed his fears, but conciliated him to such an extent that he returned to his hut and brought thence a large moorghee and a chonga of new milk for our benefit. After this, lying down within my tent, which was soon pitched, I watched our servants through the open doorway flit to and fro. Shadows vague and mysterious, lengthening with the day's decline, fell across the sward. Everything was noiseless, for most of the people of our camp were reposing after their hard day's toil: a soft haze hung over the mountains, and with eyes half closed, I seemed, though awake, to be once more dreaming in a world of mist and shadows. But 'Nature abhors a vacuum,' and I was not sorry, after all, to hear the prosaic announcement soon made that dinner was ready.

The banks of the Rungheet, however, prove anything but pleasant pastures to bivouac in for the night. On retiring to my tent at the usual hour, I found, to my horror, three immense frogs. Shouting to F—— to

eject the intruders, I climbed upon some portmanteaus, where I could survey the manœuvres of the enemy from a safe vantage-ground.

The next day we reached the little village of Namshee, whose chief feature is the residence of Lasoo Kajee, a person of some considerable importance in his country. We found all our tents, glistening home-

like in the sun, pitched in readiness for our arrival. Our march hither led us through plantations of tobacco, as well as cotton, in all stages of its growth, from the sparse-leafed flower on its fragile stem, to the rich ripe pod, which is something like an exaggerated acorn. The flower, which is of a pale primrose colour, with a pencilling of brown on its petals, resembling that of the single hollyhock. When the pod has once burst, the

cotton, of snowy whiteness, which hangs from three to four inches in length, is prevented by a wise provision of nature from falling to the ground, and getting sullied, by innumerable small fibres, which hold it to the pod till it is gathered in. A field of ripe cotton in the distance presents an appearance of newly fallen snow. In one of these we were met by a number of women, who bore down upon us with large bouquets of wild flowers; and very beautiful they were—not the women, but the flowers. Here we received quite an ovation, and had again to submit to the seductions of murwa.

At night, however, all the cows and pigs of the village came burrowing, as usual, beneath our tents; and later still we were again favoured with the pastoral melody of jackals, which discoursed 'plaintive' music. In this instance, however, the lullaby took the form of a solo. A singular thing, for these warblers of the night—nightingales as F—— calls them—are decidedly gregarious, and the visitation of one only is regarded as an ill omen by these superstitious people, which the increased dismalness of the wail of this one in particular would certainly seem to indicate. A child, too, screamed for a full hour, and C——, between sleeping and waking, was seized with a misty idea that they were offering it up as a sacrifice to some deity or other, and was only prevented from prosecuting his praiseworthy intentions of going out to ascertain by falling asleep again. F——, too, was violently attacked by leeches. During the night I was

awakened by the smell of smoke, and my first thoughts were that the tent was on fire; but opening my eyes, I beheld him seated on a pyramid of baggage, smoking like a chimney, whilst appropriately reading Dante's 'Inferno,' hoping at that distance from the ground to escape the ravages of these blood-thirsty companions.

THE HIMALAYAN NIGHTINGALE.

CHAPTER LVIII.

REGRET.

MORNING broke at last; a streak of golden light, then a sudden burst of glory, and the sun rose in all the splendour of his pageantry. We were soon up ourselves also, having if possible to reach British Sikkim ere it set again. The first objects that arrested our attention were several monks who had come down from unseen monasteries to greet us, wearing curious head-gear, covered with Thibetan devices in divers colours. From their dress they appeared to belong to quite a different order from those of either Pemionchi or Rinchingpoong.

Before leaving Namshee we were taken to see the Kajee's house, a large square mud building, with overhanging roof. The private apartments of this magnate, however, we were not permitted to enter, being, I imagine, considered too sacred for the footfall of the 'Faringhi;' but, strange as it may seem, we were conducted notwithstanding to a small temple within the house, upon the altar of which a great number of religious emblems were arrayed; the altar itself having two large elephants carved upon it. In the centre an unusually grotesque image of

Budh rested; and on each side of it several smaller ones, very much the worse for wear. On one side were shelves which contained manuscripts of the Buddhist Scriptures, bone trumpets, cymbals, an earthen pot for 'chee,' some curious copper vessels, wooden spoons, bowls, and the whole of the Kajee's culinary etceteras apparently. Hanging from the ceiling were festoons of rich brocaded silk, manufactured in Thibet.

At noon we halted for breakfast in a wild gorge, close to a foaming torrent, which we afterwards crossed over a fallen tree, in which notches had been cut to prevent the feet from slipping. It was a nervous feat to accomplish, the more so as we had to cross it singly. At two o'clock we found ourselves in British territory, on the opposite bank of the Rungheet, and were again in the midst of gold and silver fern, which we had not seen since leaving this beautiful valley on the commencement of our journey. We gathered some to add to our collection of high elevation ferns, and on arrival at encampment, tidied all for home, feeling very sad the while; for on the morrow we must bid farewell not only to this

sweet idyllic life, with all its picturesque surroundings; to the tents, which have become little homes, filled with many pleasant associations; to these happy Arcadians—the people of our camp—but to our kind host also, to whom we had grown sincerely attached. Taking a *résumé* of the whole as for the last time we sit in pleasant con-

verse, we all agree that there is nothing so charming as this bold, free, errant, half-civilised, half-barbarous life; and sadly contemplating losing sight of all, we look back kindly and forgivingly upon each disagreeable by the way, for truly there is no earthly paradise without its serpent, nor rose without its thorn.

How odd it will seem once more to return to the ways of civilisation and to home duties, to receive a daily

newspaper and daily letters, to have a roof between us and the sky, to live in a house with windows in it, to return to visiting cards and '*burra khanas*,' to toilets and morning callers, and to be obliged to wear one's hair up, and to look spick and span and ladylike once more!

'And to return to shirt collars,' chimes in F——, as though he felt himself neglected in not having been included in the category. 'And to have to get rid of this,' he added, 'just when a beard is beginning to become me;' affectionately stroking the scarce inch and a half of stubble he dignified with the name.

Our return to Darjeeling, too, is but a nail in the coffin of our departure from these hills altogether—a thought that even now pursues me like a terrible nightmare, to whom Nature has become as necessary as my daily bread. 'Oh! to see no more these golden skies of morn and eve, these crystal mountains pointing heavenwards, these rugged pines and purple shadows! No more to open the flaps of our tent and let in the sweet morning air, to look out upon the dewdrops glittering on the grass, and all before we are up in the morning!'

'Dewdrops!' muttered F—— prosaically, in a subdued soliloquy. 'Far oftener frost and icicles; and you didn't like that.'

'No more to watch the mist float lazily over the blue mountains and faint away under the sun's thirsty beams! No more to watch the day break over the hill-tops out of the still and solemn dawn! No more to breathe these

exhilarating and health-giving breezes!' 'My dear, you forget that racking pain in your shoulder-blade that kept you awake at least three nights, and gave you no peace by day.' 'To lie awake at night, and feel amidst the great stillness with nothing but canvas between us and the sky, that we are part of very Nature herself, partaking of her grand and sublime loneliness.'

'Loneliness! How about the frogs, wife. I heard you growling tremendously over their presence in the tent only a night or two ago.'

'No more to take our *al fresco* meals by gently purling rills, or watch the cook preparing his savoury messes over the rustic camp fire! To see no more——'

'Hold!' cries F——. 'Your *Lament* was almost poetical, till you came to the last phrase, to which I think you might have added that, picturesque and interesting as were the scenes that individual—the cook—created, since we were to partake of the savoury messes you so unpoetically allude to, it would have been better had we not been eye-witnesses to their manufacture.'

It was here that I expected to have been met by the man whom I sent from Pemionchi with a letter to Lattoo, entreating him to hasten to Darjeeling, return with news of her, and await our arrival at this place. To the very end we seem doomed to be disappointed in the return of our messengers. A packet of home letters, however, soon arrives, forwarded by Mrs. C——, her husband having sent a Chuprassee some days ago informing her

that we should be here to-day. We open them with beating hearts, for one or two are from England, and how much may not have happened since we last had news! Amongst the number also was one from the friend who knew and had visited Lattoo in her illness, and whose letter confirmed my worst fears. Lattoo was no more, having passed away—'fallen asleep,' as the letter expressed it—three days previously. For these tidings I was almost prepared, for as the day drew gradually nearer for our return to Darjeeling, I had been trying to school myself into the belief that it was more than possible I should find one of the attractions of my mountain life missing on my arrival there. Yet the shock was great notwithstanding, for in my affection for her all social inequalities had been forgotten, and I felt that her nature and mine, though of different clime and nation and kindred and tongue, were yet one, and a chill went through my heart as I pictured to myself the little hut—the sunshine of her presence.

Poor little Lattoo! brief had been her life, but she was ill-fitted for the one that apparently lay before her; and perhaps it is better so, for 'there's a divinity doth shape our ends, rough hew them how we will.'

Deep in 'home news' we sit, till the last gleam of golden day has set upon the mountains, and the fire-flies light their lamps and twinkle in the bushes, and the crescent moon glides up, irradiating rock, and tree, and flowing water, and the whole valley, with a tenderness

far beyond the power of language to express. Far, far up, amongst the topmost trees, gleams, star-like, a solitary fire, where some Lepcha has his dwelling, as in an eyrie. A lamp, blazing through the doorway of C——'s tent, shines upon the bushes outside, creating strange contrasts of glow and gloom in the pale moonlight; whilst the wind, softly stirring the branches, sends little patches of yellow light glinting through the leaves, which dance upon the water. From afar comes once more the lowing of cattle straying in the jungle, and the plaintive cry—not of jackals this time, but of the barbet, in wondrous harmony with our feelings, and Nature 'helpeth the mood she findeth.'

All are in the minor key, if one listens attentively—the songs of birds, the gentle rustle of the wind, the subdued roar of the great river, even the distant strains of little Rag's flute; and one realises by close association with Nature that these dwellers, remote from civilisation, must have taken their first lessons from the great Teacher herself. The relation all Art bears to Nature becomes more and more apparent as day by day we travel in her midst, and she suggests objects to the mind—the pillared temple and Doric gateway in the beetling crag, the fretted dome and Gothic arch in the forest shade. One learns, too, the affinity each art bears to the other, and that music, painting, and poetry are, after all, but *one*, under different forms of expression; as Plutarch says,

Poetry is vocal painting, and painting silent poetry.

Sitting outside our tents, strings of weird-looking men and women in coarse gabardines, carrying heavy loads, cast mysterious shadows on the white canvas as they noiselessly steal by; and within the cooking tent our Moslem cook sits once more, arranging his pots and pans for the night, muttering a prayer, and no doubt reciting an extra chapter from the Koran—for have we not had ham for dinner, as an accessory to the conventional moorghee? And is he not thereby rendered 'unclean,' by contact with the forbidden quadruped, though defunct and salted?

At the witching hour, camp fires die out for the last time, and the camp is hushed in sleep. Then is the air full of inarticulate melody, and the mystic voice of Nature begins to tell of things unseen. As I lie awake listening to the unceasing flow of the river close to which my tent is pitched, there come from below its surface mysterious mutterings and plaintive moans like those of a human voice, very indistinct, yet real notwithstanding, and I can quite enter into the ancient belief in Naiads.

So the peaceful night wears on till day appears, when we fold up our tents like the Arabs, and as silently steal away. Passing the Rungheet guard post, we recognise our old friend the Chowkeydar, who, off duty, is sitting outside his hut cleaning his deckshees; then wending our way through the forest of mimosa, whose branches droop as we approach, we ascend the mountain and zig-zag homewards, by wooded slope and ferny dell through which flow stream-

lets whose silvery chimes ring welcome to us as we pass, till reaching the tea-plantation we feel once more amongst civilisation. Here we have our farewell bivouac; and looking across upon the billowy mountains beneath which flow rivers, whose windings we had followed so many miles, we can trace by their configuration the course of the Great Rungheet, from lowland fen, up mountain gorge—up, up, to the very snowy bosom that forms its birthplace. Ponies were sent from Darjeeling to meet us at this point, where I discard my dandy. Turning our backs upon Himalaya's majestic solitudes—the most vast and sublime of the whole earth—we become gregarious animals, once more to mingle with the throng of men, content either to be anchorites amongst Nature's wilds, or take our place with others in the world's strife—happy anywhere, and wholly disagreeing with Sophocles, that 'Not to be is best of all.'

Detachments of women overtake and pass us laden with oranges from Sikkim, which they are carrying in their long baskets to Darjeeling.

The people in the green heights skywards look down upon us, suspending their toil; and we soon pass patient women, and Pharaoh's daughters, and Miriams, and the little wide-awake Moses, lying snugly in their wee

baskets still, all looking as though they had been there ever since we passed them, now so many weeks ago. On past huts with graceful garlands of melon growing over the warm thatch, the fruit now ripe and golden. Little children frightened at our approach run in, and

pariahs run out, barking furiously. On, on, till the plantation is left behind; and passing beneath the large green fronds of the tree-fern, we see, by the smoke which lies under the brow of the great mountain yonder, that we are nearing the Bhootia Busti.

All are awake now, and everything is bustle and life. Groups of swarthy and unwashed Bhootias, in crimson,

and green, and olive, and blue, stand gossiping outside tumbledown doorways; and idle Lepchas, their legs dangling over the 'khud,' sit gambling even at this hour of the day. Past a Lama carrying a 'mani,' and we feel we have not lost all association with the monks even yet. Past ragged old women spinning, very dirty but invariably

smiling. They all come out of their huts to see us go by, these child-like people, for they know we have been over into Sikkim, and have left our footprints on the mighty snows, and we are something to look at after that. Besides, have they not their own kinsfolk to greet, who come slowly wending their way upwards with loads which they have faithfully carried over almost 300 miles of mountain and valley? Young women wearing white boddices and gaily-striped petticoats, others with 'sarees' over their

heads, holding babies on their hips, smile a timid welcome. Pigs, goats, fowls, pigeons, all vie with each other to impede our progress, till—oh, agonies! some Bhootias are actually singeing a pig alive, preparatory to slaying him, their bosom companion, no doubt, scarce an hour ago. We hurry on here with eyes closed firmly and fingers in our ears.

Nearing Darjeeling and rounding the mountain spur, the evening breeze wafts towards us the sound of the peaceful convent bell which summons the gentle nuns to vespers. As we cast one glance behind us, the snows, catching the gleam of departing day, are seen to be bathed in a glittering and tremulous mystery of rose, violet, and opal; whilst the sun, that ruler of the toilsome day, lingering longest on Kinchinjunga, as though he loved it, reclines at length on his bed of crimson cloud, telling Earth that it is *her* hour of rest also. The evening star uprising now takes his place—shining like a feeble lamp at first, but later on more brightly, as twilight gently folds its mantle over tired Nature and folds her to sleep.

Lights gleamed through the windows of our pretty mountain dwelling at the sound of our approach, gentle voices greeted us, and we were once more at home.

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